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# **ORANIA AND THE REINVENTION OF AFRIKANERDOM**

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I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

## ABSTRACT

In 1991 a private town for Afrikaners was established on the bank of the Orange River, in the semi-desert of South Africa's Northern Cape Province. As a deliberately Afrikaans, and thus white, community, the town's aims and existence are controversial, but both its principles and practicalities are not unique. Endeavouring to build an Afrikaner homeland in multiracial South Africa seems incongruous, signalling a retreat from social heterogeneity as a fact of the contemporary world. It raises questions about what people do following a social, political and economic paradigm shift, and about what is occurring within a country with multiple and contradictory accounts of history and a traumatic recent past. It also means resisting the pressure to deal with the past, and therefore the present, in a certain way. Consequently, the frequent question of whether or not the town as an enterprise, or its residents, are racist, reveals instead a complex ordering of society.

Life in Orania is filled with ordinary everyday activities of earning a living, raising and educating children, socialising, and practising religion in a town where Christian principles are explicit, each combining elements of intentionality and contingency. Once superficial similarity between residents can be taken for granted, the focus shifts to the differences between them, which rise and fall in importance, highlighting the circumstantial nature of group solidarity. This raises the question of what the differences within the community are, how deeply they reach, and where fundamental commonalities lie that prompt them to *choose* to build a future together. For the few hundred people involved in the enterprise, Orania is the only way they think they will have a recognisable future: they fear the demise of Afrikaners as an ethnic group through cultural assimilation or dispersal, emigration, and population decline. Their position of victimhood and vulnerability, shaped by the past, shapes their present actions in turn. Afrikaners' interpretation of themselves as victims is easily supported by the popular historical narrative that Afrikaners have always struggled against outside authorities to be self-determining. This ethnographic study reveals that Orania is a concrete response to the fear that there may not be a place for Afrikaners in South Africa's future, in the country to which they feel they belong and where their identity is rooted.

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## GLOSSARY

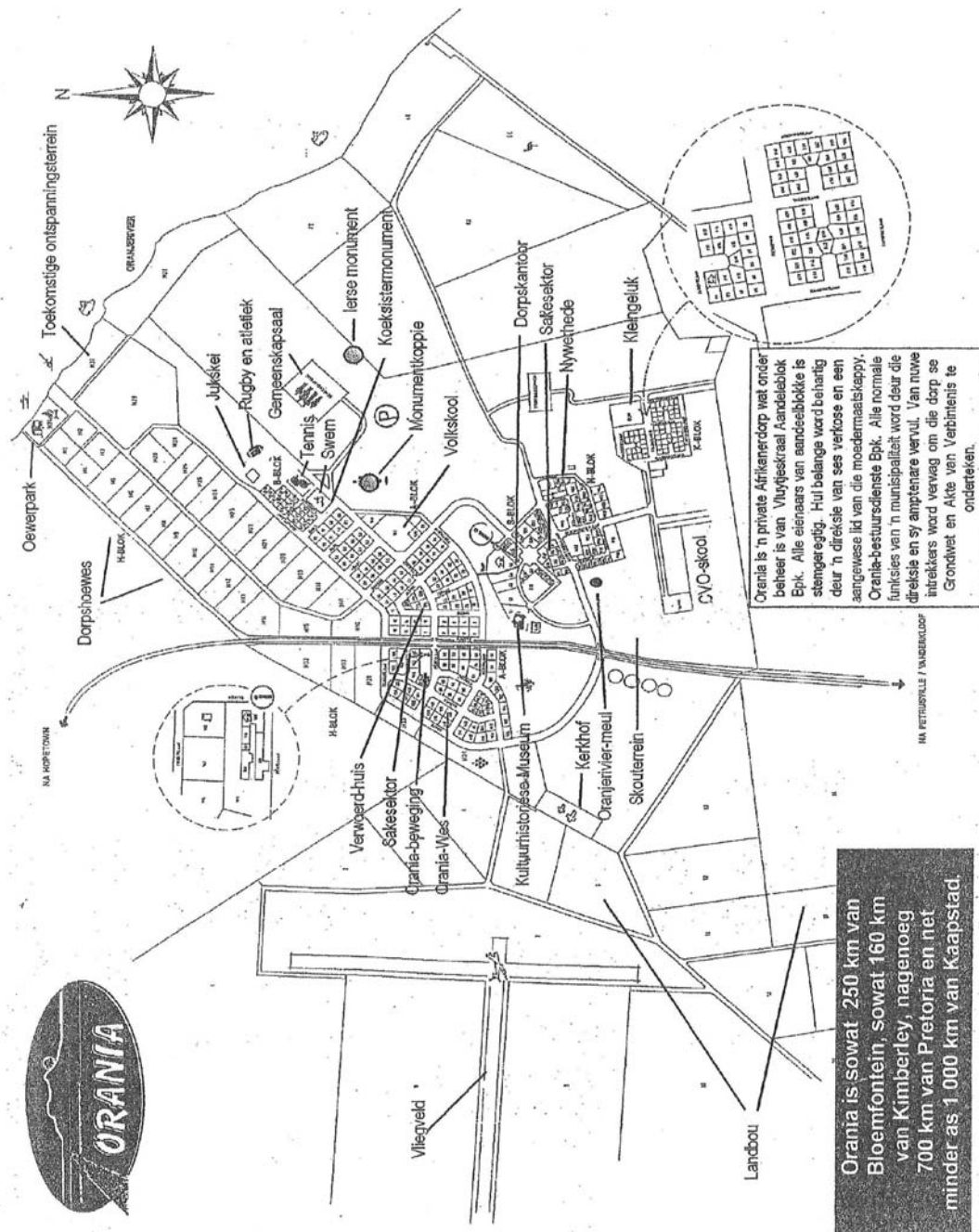
<i>aandeleblok maatskappy</i>	shareholding company
<i>bakkie</i>	pick-up truck, utility vehicle
<i>boer</i>	farmer, or synonymous with Afrikaner
<i>boeremeisie</i>	a real boer girl <i>regte boer/boeremeisie</i> : proper Afrikaner (girl)
<i>braaiing</i>	barbecuing
<i>dorpskantoor</i>	town council office
<i>dorpsraad</i>	town council
<i>Engels</i>	English: English-speaking, English-speaking South African, English nationality
<i>gatvol</i>	fed up, pissed off
<i>gebedsaksie</i>	prayer action
<i>gelykstelling</i>	equality, social levelling
<i>gelykvoeling</i>	feelings of equality, empathy
<i>gemeenskapsaal</i>	community hall
<i>grootdorp</i>	'big town,' the main part of Orania
<i>hardkoppigheid</i>	obstinacy
<i>heidene</i>	heathens
<i>kaffir, kaffirtjie</i>	racial slur referring to black South Africans
<i>keuring</i>	vetting/approval
<i>monumentkoppie</i>	hill with monuments on it
<i>oom</i>	uncle
<i>ouma</i>	grandmother
<i>klein reus</i>	little giant
<i>koeksister</i>	pastry which is deep-fried and soaked in syrup
<i>koppie</i>	hill, rocky outcrop
<i>selfstandig</i>	self-reliant or self-sustaining
<i>selfwerkzaamheid</i>	doing your own work
<i>tannie</i>	aunt
<i>tuis</i>	at home <i>Afrikanertuiste</i> : Afrikaner home <i>Tuisland</i> : homeland, implying homeland for black tribes
<i>uitwoners</i>	out-habitants
<i>verkrampste</i>	reactionary
<i>verligte</i>	enlightened
<i>volk</i>	nation, ethnic or cultural group, people
<i>volkekunde</i>	Afrikaans tradition of cultural anthropology
<i>Volkseie</i>	people's own, ie. Afrikaans in nature
<i>volkseie arbeid</i>	Afrikaans-only labour
<i>volkseie onderwys</i>	education specifically for Afrikaans children
<i>Volksvreemdes</i>	strangers to the <i>volk</i> , no-Afrikaners
<i>volkstaat</i>	ethnic homeland, literally nation-state
<i>Voortrekker</i>	pioneer



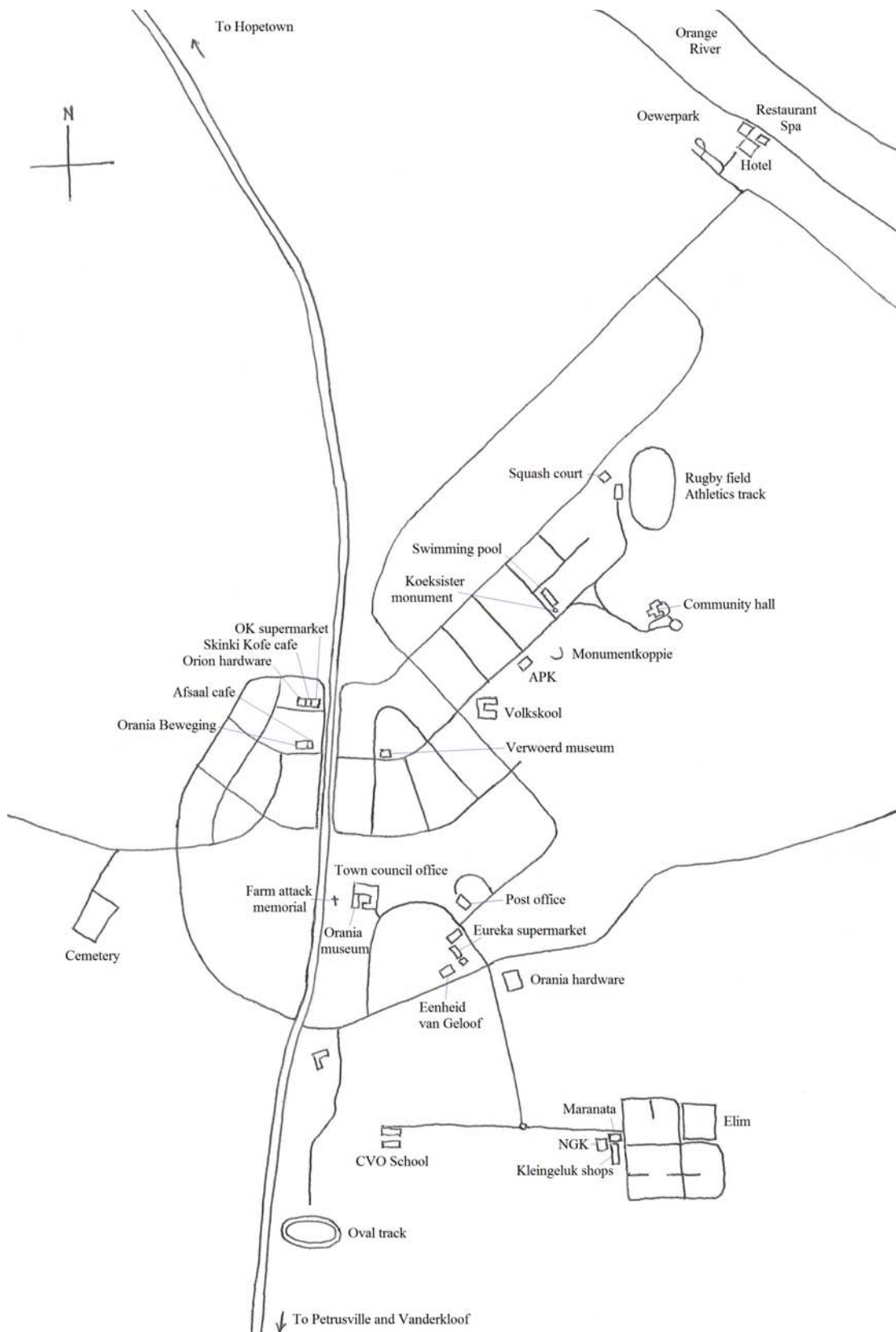
Orania's location within South Africa



The farm just north of Orania, showing the upper Karoo landscape



The map provided in the introductory pamphlet, Orania in 'n Neutedop (Orania in a nutshell)







The main part of Orania, from the crest which runs through the town



From the same position, showing the community hall on top of the hill, the rugby field (centre-left), and the swimming pool (left). Beyond the trees behind the rugby field runs the Orange River.

# **I: INTRODUCTION – WELCOME TO SOUTH AFRICA**

Eendragt maakt magt / Ex Unitate Vires / Unity is Strength  
– Mottos of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, the Union of  
South Africa, and the Republic of South Africa

On April 27<sup>th</sup> 1994, twenty million South Africans queued to vote, most for the first time. Before then, voting in national elections had been limited to the three million adults with white skin ([africanelections.tripod.com/za.html#1992\\_Referendum](http://africanelections.tripod.com/za.html#1992_Referendum)). This was the turning point in the middle of the decade which marked the transition from a society characterised by its racial hierarchy to a single integrated society. Despite the country teetering on the brink of civil war during the 1980s and early 1990s, the details of the transition were discussed around a negotiating table, by ostensibly equal parties with a common interest in a shared peaceful future. Since it was the first time in which South Africa was governed under a single democratic system, many disparate groups needed to be brought together to form a new and unitary state. The white-dominated state had been fought against by the resistance movement, itself comprising several different movements with differing means and objectives.

The majority of South Africa's population had been fighting against the white-dominated political system in which they had no voice, and which had implemented the apartheid policy. The white minority who had had control over their own future and the future of others now had to relinquish their grip. For the most part the white minority adapted to the new democratic dispensation, accepting the removal of decades and centuries of cushioning from competition, and altering the way they viewed their country and the way they participated in it. They too had to work to create a new system, to remove the old one which had signified privilege for them but restriction, brutality and oppression for others. The transition arguably asked the most from those who needed to peacefully relinquish privilege to adapt to the new society because they had to change to the greatest degree.

It is in this context, defined by its relationship to apartheid, that people live their lives. Physical appearance and language define people's pasts and, to a certain extent, their experience of the present. Group identities are defined in relation to apartheid, yet the project of merging the different groups that had comprised South

African society means marking difference is an act with political consequences if that identity is one that denoted privilege for so long. Marking difference is fraught, yet these demarcations are still socially relevant, as they imply significantly different views on the past and do not fit into the new unified national narrative in the same way. For some, the social categories that apartheid institutionalised preceded it, and people can still be conceived of as members of *volke*. A *volk* is an ethnic group or nation, where it is often assumed that this group has its own language, culture, and religion. The term *volkstaat* refers to the territory over which a *volk* has control, although it need not be a formal state. The term implies an Afrikaans territory, since when such states were created for Africans they were called homelands (*tuislande*).

While the negotiations to end apartheid were going on, a small group of Afrikaners were in the process of implementing their dream of Afrikaner self-determination. This group, which included the theologian and cultural advocate Carel Boshoff, bought a derelict Northern Cape town by the banks of the Orange River. This town, Orania, is a remote settlement in the country's semi-desert Karoo region, around 150km to the south-west of Kimberley. By 2011, twenty years after its founding, the population was estimated to be nearing 800, which includes many young families, retirees and young male workers. The population grows mostly through immigration, both from urban and rural areas, although there is now a generation of children who have grown up in Orania. The town is by the Orange River, whose water supports the two main industries: farming and tourism. In addition to the maize and wheat grown in the region, Orania is South Africa's largest grower of pecans. Some visitors to Orania are simply curious about the town, but many are supporters of the town's cause who holiday there regularly, appreciating the town's relaxed atmosphere. Many aspects of the social environment are familiar for Afrikaners: the community is overtly Christian, with people expressing their Afrikaans identities in everyday ways as well as explicitly celebrating their cultural heritage through commemorations. Orania is inhabited exclusively by Afrikaners and those willing to adopt Afrikaans cultural practices, and it differs markedly from the rest of South Africa by the absence of black workers.

Orania is well known throughout South Africa. The fact that they are blatantly running against the grain of the national political trend means they have

become a by-word for racism and the nostalgic recreation of a time when they held power over others. Although it was the realisation of a concept which was already several decades old – a critique that apartheid was unworkable, made during the height of apartheid's apparent success in the 1960s – the timing coincided with the clarity that apartheid's end was imminent and also necessary. This attempt to build a volkstaat appeared to be a reaction to the introduction of democracy and equal rights for all. The creators of Orania are pursuing something that looks on the surface like the old and discredited system. They are investing the Afrikaner volk with new life at a point when many believe it should be allowed to continue its long decline.

Yet if we look at South Africa in terms of continuity and change, then in addition to asking why this group of Afrikaners insists on differentiating themselves from mainstream society, we can also look at why it would be expected that they could and would reverse their view to conform to a new set of expectations. This minority of conservative Afrikaners for the most part maintained their views while South Africa changed around them. Of course, South Africa's changes were in many directions and relative to various social positions. Leading up to the transition, the support base of the governing National Party had shifted, new forms of power sharing had been introduced, and it was by no means only a united white population who supported continuity. Despite their disagreements, the different parts of the liberation movement were still fighting for democracy, so their participation in the new dispensation is not a change from previous trajectories. But it is nevertheless more surprising how much South Africa did succeed in changing during the 1980s and 1990s, than that a minority continued to hold on to their existing views. Analytically rather than politically, those who staunchly adhere to their Afrikaans identity are easier to understand than those who adapted to the new South Africa: they continued along their existing trajectory whereas others changed.

Apartheid was an internationally well-known moral cause, an archetype of oppression and intractable conflict, but this apparent clarity of stance hides a multitude of different stories, endlessly fascinating and complex. The dominant history of South Africa is that of the recent struggle against apartheid, but in the context of a many-sided and long-term conflict, the dominance of one narrative should be questioned. If we take for granted that apartheid was wholly and self-



evidently a system of oppression and that fighting it was a moral obligation, then those who supported it could only have been wrong, or at best misguided. Yet, whilst the mainstream account of history focuses on the lives that many millions had to endure, it involves conflating the intentions of historical actors who implemented this system with the effects of their actions. It does not account for the how the situation came about.

This puzzle has long interested me. The anti-apartheid literature that I discovered when I was fifteen involves pointing out the injustice of the system, that the explanations of separate but equal were not a reality (Courtenay 1989, Paton 1958, Brink 1979). The pattern is often of characters shaken out of their apathy by a sudden turn of events (Brink 1979; see also Brink 1986, 1989). The descriptions of suburban lives of white South Africans found in novels were in some ways similar to mine in Australia, yet the society they lived in seemed utterly foreign (Gordimer 1953). But that familiarity suggested that if I were brought up in a different environment, I might also view the world differently. For anti-apartheid literature to be necessary, for the point to have to be made, indicates how easy it was to not fight against apartheid. The mono-dimensional monsters or suburban naïfs of the struggle literature did not help explain why apartheid existed. They also only told one side of the story, explaining the moral necessity of speaking out against apartheid. How and why such a political establishment, large scale social restructuring and economic system came about cannot be accounted for in terms of people having been morally wrong. Immorality implies social pathology, and apartheid was too large and enduring a framework to be defined only in negative terms.

This perceived wrongness is one of the factors which makes Orania interesting to researchers, journalists and the general public. They are going against the grain of the present climate, yet are maintaining their continuity with the past. In secluding themselves in a manner which replicates the homeland format which Africans were subjected to during apartheid, the view that segregation was intended for the exertion of power over others is thrown into doubt.

## **MORAL RELATIVISM**

In the early years of apartheid becoming policy, the historian C.W. de Kiewiet warned against underestimating the complexity of apartheid and its support base.

Of the men in South Africa who support it some are uninformed and deeply prejudiced; still others are angry or frightened, many feel helpless or bewildered; selfishness and indifference are common. These attitudes are easily discernible amongst both English and Afrikaans-speaking sections of the population. There is, however, a gross and dangerous error in not recognizing that the best of the advocates of *apartheid* are men of personal worthiness, with genuinely conscientious and moral spirits. This concession is not in conflict with the opposite admission that there exists in the present government an ugly and sinister self-righteousness which seems prepared to sacrifice the liberty and comity of a democratic society in order to attain the harsh ends of an imperious racial nationalism. Yet it is still wrong to believe that a body of ungenerous and selfish motives is all that sustains the doctrines of *apartheid*. (De Kiewiet 1956:41-42)

With this, De Kiewiet anticipated a perspective that developed in the historiography of South Africa, of focusing on all the ways apartheid did not work, from the everyday discriminations to the abuses conducted by the police state. De Kiewiet equates the failure to try to understand people with their presumed *moral* failings.

Adam Kuper, originally from South Africa, highlights the influence of power dynamics and the politics of indigeneity in academic study (2003). He argues that the way right wing and indigenous movements talk about culture is in some respects quite similar, yet the way these groups are perceived differs vastly. Kuper notes that indigenous groups are often those which were the archetypal primitive society of anthropology during the first half of the twentieth century. Pursuing the intelligibility and logic of other cultures has given the discipline a socially liberal bent. The development of anthropologists as critics of colonialism makes them advocates for the vulnerable groups they study. However, this positioning of advocacy for the underdog, or those who we consider being in need of representation, means that the study of people on the other end of the power spectrum is often neglected. People who are too similar to ourselves can be read through our existing frameworks and be regarded as deviant, instead of trying to understand their frameworks (Toumey 1994:9-11; Gariott & O'Neill 2008:384-5). Clifford Geertz tries to carve out a space

for arguing a position between extremes, pointing out that to critique a criticism should not imply adhering to the initial position, which “enables one to reject something without thereby committing oneself to what it rejects” (Geertz 1984:264).

Interestingly, following the revelation of the atrocities committed against them during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, Afrikaners had been viewed as underdogs by the international community in the early decades of the twentieth century, a situation which was reversed as the century wore on – arguably through their responses to that earlier victimisation. Kuper’s article ‘The Return of the Native’ (2003) opens with the question of why it seems self-evident that Afrikaners cannot be considered an indigenous people. Whilst he carries the point with other examples, he suggests cynical motives on the part of these Boer representatives. The study of white South Africans seems to easily slip into moral judgement. Regarding his study intended to explore the effect of power on those who hold it, Vincent Crapanzano (1985) was criticised by South African anthropologists (Hugo 1985, Boonzaier et al. 1985) for writing as though he held the moral high ground. Yet such an attitude is not tenable for outsiders, since “[w]e are morally superior to them only if we can be certain that we, *if placed in their predicament...*, would act better than they do. How many of us can be certain of that?” (cited in Hugo 1985:57). But although we could take the view that partiality towards the subaltern might be taking the wrong path towards a nonetheless politically desirable end (see Barnard 2006:8), I argue that a suspension of moral judgement is not merely proper but a requirement for understanding the people that we as anthropologists study.

If anthropologists shy away from asking some of the hard questions or from questioning their intuitive sympathies, it may be because this inclination is part of the wider western framework of which we are often part. This is the argument of Joel Robbins (2013), who builds on the work of Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2009). According to them, reflection on historical events such as the holocaust helped victimhood become one of the defining ways of understanding other people. It is on the grounds of shared humanity that we can empathise: no cultural or contextual knowledge is required in order for us to be able to relate to people who might otherwise be incomprehensible to us. However, acknowledging someone’s status as a victim means that, if their suffering was brought about by the actions of

other people, then those people are characterised by having inflicted that suffering. Apartheid has become a synonym for oppression, the restriction of some people's liberty and potential for the sake of a reprehensible belief in the superiority of those with white skin. Such a prominent place in the international imagination makes it difficult to recast the population who implemented it in a neutral light, to remove the stigma of a history which is still within many people's lifetimes. The fact that apartheid was implemented on the lines of colour and ethnic group has left the victim/perpetrator line appear clear to many in present-day SA. The only socially accepted response is to apologise for that past and to disassociate oneself from it, to be reborn as a New South African. In which case, not breaking with that tainted past sufficiently and refusing to conform to the duality of victim or (repentant) perpetrator is going to make people uncomfortable.

From a philosophical position, John Stuart Mill argues that understanding views that may be contrary to our own is important in supporting our own views, asserting that "He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that" (Mill 1957 [1859]:97). Even for those who hold a well-supported position, without understanding the arguments for and against that position, there may be no intellectual justification for holding those views in the first place:

Their conclusion may be true, but it might be false for anything they know: they have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them, and considered what such persons may have to say; and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess. (Mill 1957 [1859]:97)

With respect to anthropological study, S.F. Nadel makes empathetic positioning a necessary part of being an anthropologist. Indeed, he states that they require "the intangible faculty of thinking with another person's mind and seeing through his eyes. Call it empathy if you like: something of this faculty must be present in the good field anthropologist" (Nadel 1958 [1951]:19). This is impossible if we start with a conclusion in mind. We cannot shy away from studying people for fear that we will disagree with them or dislike them, because we cannot know their position without having studied them.

Attempting to understand Afrikaners, as one segment of the puzzle that is South Africa, is important. If the dominant perception of a group is that they are racist, why should it be supposed that this is a complete picture, any more than any other basic stereotype should be? Anthropology assumes that there is a logic underlying social behaviour which makes it ideally suited to understanding Orania: connecting immediate actions to wider understandings by reading the cosmos in everyday details. If we no longer discuss witchcraft in terms of efficacy but of social outcomes then we can do the same for a contemporary intentional community in the South African desert. Culturally specific logics or frameworks may not ultimately be entirely consistent but that cannot be assumed from the outset. Marshall Sahlins echoes this and combines a philosophical relativism with a methodological one.

Relativism in this methodological sense, however, does not mean that any culture or custom is as good as any other, if not better; instead, it is the simple prescription that, in order to be intelligible, other people's practices and ideals must be placed in their own context, understood as positional values in a field of their own cultural relationships, rather than appreciated in terms of intellectual and moral judgements of our making. Relativism is the provisional suspension of one's own judgements in order to situate the practices at issue in the historical and cultural order that made them possible (Sahlins 2000:21)

Understanding must be prior to assessment, so remaining open-minded towards our subjects, including in the selection of people we study, is a matter of intellectual rigour. Bronislaw Malinowski was not hindered in conducting his ethnography by the ambivalence towards his informants which was later revealed in his fieldwork diaries (Ronald Stade, personal communication 22/6/14, see Malinowski 1967). As Sahlins points out, for an idea or behaviour to make sense, then it does so within the framework in which it exists. For something to be logical, it means it is consistent with the assumptions on which it is based. If shared assumptions and frames of reference are one of the ways of delineating cultural systems, then these understandings of what makes sense and what does not can be limited to social or cultural groupings. People who do not share that frame of reference may not regard those ideas or behaviours in the same way. This means if something is correct, or valued, or regarded as moral, it is only so within a bounded social sphere and under certain conditions.

Since cultural values guide appropriate social interaction, they thereby include moral standards. By being consistent with the framework within which they are enculturated, and thus part of a community which shares certain moral values, people acting in accordance with their own social obligations can be at odds with the moral values of other groups. If morality is culturally bounded then it is a property of a social relationship: something is moral in relation to relevant social actors (see Browning 1993:184-5). Christopher Browning concludes his study of police reservists during the holocaust with this point: “Within virtually every social collective, the peer group exerts tremendous pressures on behaviour and sets moral norms” (ibid.:189). If both sense and morality are culturally defined, then morality or immorality cannot be used as grounds for studying or declining to study certain groups.

Given that cultures change through time, if the moral correctness of behaviour can be culturally bounded then it can be temporally bounded also. If ideas were held or enacted correctly in light of what people believed, then intent must be relativised. In that case, there can only be a retrospective reassessment of whether something was right or wrong within the context of the social space and time. Those actions and intentions are located inside that logical framework, which in this case is temporally bounded. This is not to argue that apartheid did indeed make logical sense, since there were various contradictions in the ideology and between ideology and implementation, and many compromises were made. Segregation and apartheid were experienced and justified differently at different times (Giliomee 1995:201-2). A lot of the historical debate about apartheid is about whether it was a grand plan of misplaced idealism which was corrupted, or whether it was a cynical grasping of political control for economic power. What we need to ensure is that we consider our informants, both historical and contemporary, as rational critical beings, hearing them out and giving them the benefit of the doubt.

### **AFRIKANERS AND APARTHEID**

Robert Thornton points out that South Africa has always had a curiously prominent place in the international imagination.

In comparison with the atrocities in the twentieth-century European wars of nationalism (called 'World Wars'), or of such wars elsewhere in Africa, in South America, and in South Asia, it is not at all obvious that South Africa's policies and political actions have, in themselves, been more brutal or more outrageous than many others. South Africa has nevertheless taken on the role of a sort of generic political passion play that could be equally useful to capitalists or communists, socialists or democrats. South Africa's politics have been part of debate far beyond the borders of South Africa itself, and for far longer than any particular event would seem to warrant. (Thornton 1995:200)

If there is something particular about moral indignation in relation to South Africa we should be especially careful in our analysis. Apartheid was neither entirely unique nor unprecedented, and outrage against apartheid hid the ghosts of many other countries. Apartheid was developed from legal precedents from the early years at the Cape and particularly since the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. So it could be argued that apartheid was not such a radical departure from what was already underway. Yet, as Kinghorn et al. (1986a:1) point out, if apartheid were the same as the segregation that already existed, the term and the policy would not have come into use. Apartheid was a policy that won an election for the National Party. What was normal social practice, with accordant social sanctions, became legal obligation, extended to all spheres of life and society.

It is important to point out that the different elements of what is referred to as apartheid can be disaggregated. It can mean a time period from 1948-1994, although some of the legislation associated with the policy existed since Union and some was developed several decades into the National Party's rule. It can refer to petty apartheid, which was the separation of facilities in everyday life, or grand apartheid, the large-scale project of geographic relocation of people according to their ethnic or racial group. Apartheid's ideas, plans, legislation and effects are not identical. The police state that protected white rule and enforced apartheid policy was not coterminous with it. Apartheid is used as a synonym for oppression, but what the restrictions actually were varied over time. We need to think about which of its many components was wrong and why. Even if we agree that restriction of civil liberties and curtailing of educational and economic prospects is unjust, is the alignment of class and race, or the fact of class differentiation, experienced as equally unjust by those whom it disadvantages? Is authoritarian rule or single party domination more

problematic if that domination is by people vastly different from yourselves? Is the assumption of the division of society into distinct ethnic nations the cause of injustice? Viewing apartheid as a monolithic enterprise means that a moral position on apartheid appears to be self-evident. This can divide South Africans into mutually exclusive positions in relation to apartheid, as its victims or perpetrators. From this position, it seems impossible to accept the vulnerability now claimed by some white South Africans given their status as the instigators and beneficiaries of apartheid.

Given that apartheid was a policy, despite its practice in previous centuries, bred in the minds of Afrikaner nationalists of the mid-twentieth century, then it is there that answers may be found. Apartheid was a vision, from the perspective of an Afrikaner nationalist intelligentsia, of how the world should be, so we need to look at where this vision came from and how it developed through time. Unless we are prepared to assume that much of a population of several million was engaged in a way of life that was evil, ignorant or nonsensical, for a period of several decades, we can investigate whether there was a logical framework within which the support of a particular social system made sense. The question is in what the intentions of those who conceived it, implemented, and supported it were. Interrogating those intentions will help us to understand whether there was an internal logic to apartheid, in other words, whether it could have been truly perceived as a moral system by those who created it, or whether the motivation was strategic benefit.

Although sections of South African society, particularly relating to its citizens of European origin, appear to be western in form or outlook, this apparent similarity is deceptive. South Africa folds aspects of western European culture against different African concepts, yet the western aspects are different from Europe, even granted that 'the west' is an indefinite concept. While the 1960s was a time of social questioning in Europe and America, in South Africa it was the heyday of apartheid, when apartheid still appeared feasible to its proponents. If the secularisation and liberalisation did come, it was not until the following decades. There was no television broadcast until 1976, and then only that provided by the state. Some people still speak of the fight against communism and social uniformity as a present threat. Civil rights and full citizenship were closely followed by democracy only in 1994.



In a country with eleven official languages and more linguistic variety besides, most of the population is multilingual. In texts written in Afrikaans, cited quotations in English or Dutch are not translated into Afrikaans (eg. Schoeman 2008:277). English language films are not subtitled or dubbed into other languages, although they were in the past, with broadcasts to accommodate English and Afrikaans speakers. Afrikaans-speakers use kinship terms, *oom* (uncle) and *tannie* (aunt) as respectful forms of address to people older than them, terms which were formerly used only for white Afrikaners but which now delineate a boundary of Afrikaans-speakers. Another thing which might strike an outsider as unusual is that Afrikaners may greet family and close friends by kissing each other on the mouth. This includes siblings, parents and children, but only between women, or women and men: men do not kiss each other outside of the nuclear family. These are a few ways in which Afrikaner society is distinctive.

South African society exemplifies the intersection of many influences and perspectives which merge and conflict with each other. Its population has many different origins, both international and indigenous and combinations of the two. It was in effect twice colonised, there have been battles between and within most social groups, its society has been subjected to social engineering, it has vast wealth and debilitating poverty, scientific discovery and illiteracy. Africa meets Europe at the stopover point between Europe and Asia, bringing some peculiar and some very common complications, as will be outlined below.

### **EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The picture of two sides in conflict, one oppressing the other for racial ends, begs the question of why such a system was instituted. For that, another kind of history is required, one that is not so much contradictory to the mainstream account as it is complementary. This is not the place for a detailed history of South Africa, but an outline of a few factors relevant to this thesis is in order. Comprehensive or general histories of the country (Wilson & Thompson 1969; Thompson 1990, Davenport 1978; De Kiewiet 1942; Burger 1944) or of apartheid (Lapping 1989; Posel 1997 [1991]; O'Meara 1996; Dubow 2014) provide further detail, including on romantic nationalism (du Toit 1983, Hofmeyr 1988, Giliomee 2003a).

South Africa had never been a Dutch territorial colony, but an outpost of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC). A refreshment station was established at the Cape in 1652 to provide fresh water and food to ships travelling between the Dutch East Indies and Europe. Five years later free settlers were encouraged to establish themselves and to farm, and they were permitted to own slaves to help work the land. Due to the limited fertile land at the Cape, gradually further concessions of land had to be made by the VOC, and the settlement expanded beyond the Cape flats and east into the hills, further dispossessing Khoikhoi inhabitants. The VOC and later the British administration preferred to consolidate the colony's territory, but the shortage of fertile land and the open frontier meant it was easiest for people seeking land to establish their own space on the ungoverned edges (Davenport 1978:22).

Gradually the economic situation found its equilibrium and the Cape began to prosper, and the settlers at the Cape began to regard themselves as Afrikaners by the end of the seventeenth century (Wilson & Thompson 1969:197). Afrikaners meant Africans, as distinct from Europeans, which referred to the company servants whose residence was temporary. Intermarriage between the populations of European origin came to form a new unified group. The French Huguenot settlers and the high proportion of German-speaking arrivals had been consciously dispersed amongst the Dutch-speaking population so as to assimilate them into the Dutch population. The decision of the company to import slaves from the East Indies and other parts of Africa to work the farms shaped the context of social relations. The present-day Cape Coloureds have their origins in the intermarriage between all the Cape's early inhabitants. The Dutch spoken at the Cape became infused with vocabulary from the many languages it came in contact with, and gradually evolved into the new language of Afrikaans. Indeed, the publication of the first Afrikaans book in 1856 used Arabic script (Giliomee 2003a:101). Despite a significant period during which social mobility and interactions were relatively fluid (van Jaarsveld 1964:5), the divisions created by the issues of slavery and skin colour shaped the following centuries (Giliomee 1986). In the early Cape Colony, the ownership of black people by white, so that black people worked while white wielded authority, shaped an

intractable class division where whites could not accept any kind of comparability with black.

South Africa was under the custodianship of Britain during the Napoleonic Wars, from 1795 to 1803 (Davenport 1978:29). When Britain took control again in 1806 with designs for South Africa being a colony, they took on not only an indigenous population, but a group of European settlers who had come to consider the country their own. The establishment of British rule and thus British institutions and the English language grated with the Afrikaners. There was strong resistance to British imperialism and its intrusion into the management of affairs which had previously been decided by citizens themselves. After the slave trade was outlawed in 1807 by the British parliament, steps were taken to improve the conditions of slaves, and by 1833 all slaves in the British Empire were freed (Thompson 1990:58). In South Africa this meant a transition of four years' 'apprenticeship' for slaves before they were freed. But for people reluctant to make this change, the fact that they were only to be compensated by about one third of the estimated 'value' of their slaves, and that this compensation was only available in London and therefore had to be claimed via agents, was unlikely to make them more amenable to British rule. They had been drifting beyond the reaches of the Dutch authorities, so the imposition of any kind of top-down law would have been difficult, let alone one which they viewed as foreign. The freedom of the slave and Khoi populations was relative, since there were still indentured labourers brought from India into the 1860s (ibid.:65).

By the mid-1830s the white settlement stretched from the Cape along the coast to the Keiskamma River. This was the decade in which as many as 6000 frontier Afrikaners (with about as many coloured, Khoi and black employees) moved northwards into the interior to take new land (Davenport 1978:39). The objectives of the Great Trek are many and varied. Davenport argues that the secrecy required during its planning means there are few sources to explain most of the *voortrekkers'* motivations (ibid.:39). Nonetheless, historians cite several factors besides rejection of British imperialism. The social situation in the colony of whites meant there was a fear of *gelykstelling*, a term which means equality or social levelling, which was implied by the equal positioning of all citizens in the face of the law (Giliomee 1986:5-6). That there was no equality in practice was not recognised by the trekkers,

but the conviction of several slave owners for mistreating their slaves was viewed as an intrusion into private matters. F.A. van Jaarsveld explains that the historical canon cites a religious element to the racial motives for the Great Trek, where “The *British administration* had stood in the shoes of *Pharaoh* and oppressed them in Egypt – a country that they had had to forsake to seek freedom: And so the exodus to the *Promised Land* was undertaken” (Van Jaarsveld 1964:9; see also De Villiers 1987, Mitchener 1981; and Du Toit 1983 for a thorough critique). Another intention of the Trek was for the group to establish an autonomous territory for themselves. While this meant going into territory which belonged to others, they considered that they bought the land they settled from Africans, though whether the same thing was understood by the participants in the transaction was another matter. Leonard Thompson writes that “the idea that a person could have property rights in land did not exist in African culture” (Thompson 1990:71). The contact resulted in conflict, and the trekkers lost some and won some of the battles. In the course of the Great Trek of 1835-8 and the decades following, more than a dozen Afrikaner republics were established, of which two, the Orange Free State (Oranje Vrystaat, OVS) and the Transvaal Republic (Zuidafrikaansche Republiek, ZAR) were the largest and most enduring.

As a result of the encroaching of the colony on their territory, the Khoikhoi had been assimilated into the labour force, as were former slaves. Africans were often obliged to offer their labour to the economy, and taxation meant they needed to take part in the cash economy (ibid.:111). The interests of chiefs in consolidating their kingdoms was also served by sending out workers to earn money, but whose return was ensured by the promise of land (Beinart & Dubow 1995:8-9). With the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and gold on the Rand, South Africa went from being a colonial outpost to a source of wealth. From the outset the mines’ labour force was structured so that white people received advantages over their black counterparts, whose menial pay and compound accommodation set the pattern for the following century. Although they were already informally in place, the first colour bar and pass laws restricting the freedom of movement and job opportunities for black people were passed by the Transvaal government in the 1890s (Thompson 1990:121). Much of the differential treatment persisted or was brought about through

lobbying from white workers, who were the source of the political mandate. The fact that the South African population and the electorate were not one and the same continued to shape political action through the twentieth century. It influenced who received what from the state.

The policy of segregation suited the mining industry, but also other interest groups. These included farmers who sought further control over their workers, white workers who struggled against competition, middle and upper class whites who were discomfited by rapid urbanisation of lower classes, coloureds who wanted to maintain their social position above Africans, and Africans who lamented the move away from traditional authority (Marks & Trapido 1987:8).

Although apartheid tried to undo the social integration between different groups of South Africans, it was the integration of Africans into the labour force that had created the situation in the first place. This carried further the contact made through the incursions of settlers into African territory in the nineteenth century, after some of the initial social integration of the seventeenth century had ceased.

Despite all the constraints on black, coloured and Indian South Africans, it proved possible for the restrictions to be further systematised and consolidated. Although Deborah Posel argues that apartheid was not a complete plan in existence before the political ascent of the National Party, she does so in opposition to the mainstream literature (Posel 1997 [1991]:2-4). The view that apartheid was a grand plan for domination of South Africa by the white minority could be seen to be supported by the fact that the 1950s brought the bulk of apartheid legislation, although much of it expanded upon earlier restrictive legislation or practice.

Within the first few years of rule by the National Party, they had brought in legislation to classify the whole population in terms of racially hierarchised categories of White, Coloured, Asian, and Black, further broken into ethnic sub-categories, then dividing residential areas among those racial categories so that people would live amongst people classified the same as them. They also banned marriages and sexual relationships between white and non-white people. From then on, public amenities, from park benches, buses, post office entrances and toilets, were separated into those for whites and those for non-whites. Invariably, these parallel worlds were separate but not equal. This form of segregation, known as petty

apartheid, was eclipsed in the 1960s with the advent of Bantu Education, the Group Areas Act, and the homelands policy. The formalisation of territorial separation of different racial and tribal groups, or grand apartheid, was premised on the idea that each group of people could best develop when investing in their own people, in the nature of that people. Thus, the right of non-white people to vote was established, but only in the homelands to which they were presumed to belong, and not in greater South Africa, which was classified as white. The historically established franchise for coloured people in the Cape Province was revoked.

Both the Group Areas Act and the creation of the homelands, which were mostly discontinuous clusters of land brought under a 'native' administration, meant the removal of whole groups of people. Most often this meant black and coloured people being forcibly removed from their urban homes to be placed in an area that was not yet a town. Some previously cosmopolitan or mixed urban areas, reclassified as white due to being located in the inner-city, were bulldozed. The bulldozing of Sophiatown and District Six remained sore points, the latter remaining a hillside within Cape Town, mostly bare but for religious buildings. In order for African people to be in an urban area, they had to carry a pass, authorised by their employer, at all times, stating their permission to be in the area. Such passes had to be presented on request. The notorious Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 was the response to protests against the pass laws (Lapping 1989:138).

The state instituted an education system for Africans, to replace the haphazard education by mission schools, which could not educate the whole population. This Bantu Education system taught students in practical subjects, focusing on vocational skills (UNESCO 1967: 48-53). Since colour bar restrictions for jobs meant that only unskilled or low skilled jobs were available for Africans, the restriction of education to practical skills was regarded by most as a means of perpetuating servitude of the black population to the white, by limiting the skills which could be acquired. There was, however, a university for black students at Fort Hare, and tertiary education was available by distance education. A UNESCO report into education, culture and science under apartheid concluded that apartheid "is a policy of deliberate inequality built into the educational system, expressed in

scientific and cultural activities, and underlined in the regulations governing access to information” (ibid.:204).

As restrictions on many aspects of life increased, so protests against them increased. Organisations formed by Africans in order to organise politically were banned under the guise of prohibiting communist organisations. During the 1970s and 1980s legislation was introduced to respond to the growing discontent, low scale civil war and ungovernability of the country in face of mass protest. The 1980s saw two states of emergency instituted, providing the government and its security authorities effectively any powers they wished. The sanctions imposed on South Africa from around the world added to the economic difficulty of the state. Behind this screen of intractability began the negotiations for the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of individuals and parties, and the negotiations towards the beginning of democracy.

The 1980s saw the breaking up of the Afrikaner establishment. Although Afrikaans social and political institutions were arguably not as monolithic as they appeared before, the diversification of political parties and alongside it, the establishment of new churches, indicated growing dissent with the ruling National Party’s (NP) governing. While the NP was edging towards reform, its traditional conservative Afrikaans support base were moving further to the right, finding political voice in the Conservative Party (KP) and a multitude of extra-political organisations discussing different visions of the future. Carel Boshoff, a former theology professor, was a prominent figure involved in these groupings. In 1988 he established the Afrikaner Vryheidstigting (Avstig, Afrikaner Freedom Foundation) which argued for the creation of a *volkstaat*. Accepting that majority rule was inevitable, the only way to ensure self-determination was secession (van Rooyen 1994:80). In 1990 they were able to purchase an empty town which had originally been built by the Department of Water to house workers on the Orange River Project. This is the town which is the subject of this thesis.

## **TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PAST**

It is counterintuitive that members of the Afrikaner group, in whose name all kinds of things were done in the past, should now be arguing that they are discriminated

against and taking measures for the protection of their ethnic group. The establishment of a *volkstaat* looks like an attempt to pursue the exclusionary apartheid policies of the past. Yet a *volkstaat*, bearing more similarity to an ethnic homeland for Afrikaners than to apartheid in its broader sense of white domination, means that it represents some continuities and some discontinuities with apartheid as it existed. Support for a *volkstaat* roughly correlates with the second of two general views of what was wrong with apartheid. The first is that apartheid was a straightforward system of oppression, where any justifications of ethnic particularity were cynically deployed to disguise oppression based on ideas of the innate superiority of white people. From this view, apartheid had no possible justification and was a crime against humanity. There is nothing that can be redeemed from that period of white South Africans' past. The second view is that apartheid was a sincere attempt to ensure the peaceful coexistence of South Africa's different population groups, but the details of the policy or its implementation were flawed. This meant that the fault of apartheid was not in the premise of territorially separating people into ethnic groups, but in its application, in the shortage of investment or the lack of political will to implement the policy fully and consistently. For those who take the latter view, instead of disowning the traumatic past as well as all that is associated with apartheid, they are trying to reform the historical perspective. Significantly, when they spoke about apartheid it is mostly with reference to grand apartheid – very few people tried to offer any intellectual justification for petty apartheid. A different set of explanations come into play when considering why some people might try to save some of its legacy, as most who did support it have long since abandoned its cause.

Because the first understanding of apartheid dominates the public domain, the need is for white South Africans or Afrikaners in particular to distance themselves from it, rejecting any relativising for fear of seeming to justify racial inequality. Apartheid is inevitably bound up in the identity of white South Africans, but those who are not prepared to disavow half a century of their group's history are trying to reform the view of it instead. This means looking at what was intended by apartheid's instigators to understand where the implementation diverged from the plan rather than assuming the whole principle to have been wrong, and reintroducing



the nuances to the discussion to include the positive achievements of the National Party's rule alongside the negative.

### **ABANDON THE PLAN AND ADAPT TO SOCIETY, OR ABANDON SOCIETY AND ADAPT THE PLAN**

The question remains, why oppose the new direction that the country is taking, particularly when taking the unpopular path left Afrikaners friendless and isolated in the past? Why choose the path of most resistance? The options for the white population were to reject the plan they had attempted and which had ended in failure and take part in creating a unified South Africa, or to refine and adapt the plan and reject the new society. If people's political views are connected to how they think society works, then if they still adhere to the same underlying beliefs about how people work, they will continue in the same political direction rather than moving with the shifts around them. Believing that it was apartheid's implementation rather than its premise which was flawed means that the original premise on which it was based – that people belong to ethnic groups which should remain distinct from each other – is not disproved by the fact that the policy was unsuccessfully implemented. In fact, for some, the vulnerable position of Afrikaners as a minority within a democratic South Africa where the majority rules, affirms the need to actively engage with the mistakes and also the achievements of the past rather than dismissing it all. The fact that apartheid had failed did not mean that the new plan to create a unified South Africa would work, nor that a unified country would accommodate the interests of the Afrikaans and other minorities. They worried that they would not belong to the new South Africa and assimilating into it would be a means to their dissolution as a group. They have a tainted past and they fear that they will not be allowed to keep their identity.

For the more conservative among Afrikaners, the problem with conceding that apartheid had no merits or justifications would amount to invalidating all of the things associated with it. The label 'apartheid' intuitively groups together a number of things, five decades and the experiences of millions of people and all the things associated with white privileges, and its political sensitivity extends to all of these related things rather than simply the idea of separation. That would include the

Afrikaans ethnic identity and its symbols, historical account and language: precisely the cultural institutions that make up and sustain an Afrikaans group identity.

Conservative Afrikaners cite the reduction in Afrikaans language in official use, on packaging and in the commercial sphere, and particularly in schools, as evidence for this. The emphasis on South African history as the history of the struggle against apartheid means the stories that explain Afrikaner identity are edged out, as are the leaders and historical figures after whom towns, streets and landmarks were named, but which are now being renamed to commemorate someone else's heroes. On top of this, the crime and excessive violence and the inability or unwillingness of the authorities to do anything about it exacerbates feelings of vulnerability. Despite having lost political power, whites are still relatively well off and that provides some degree of control over their fortunes, but many feel vulnerable to political whims. For the group to persist in a multicultural state, political autonomy is required.

Even if white people continue to prosper compared to other groups of South Africans, the government regularly sends out the message that white people are not its priority. The economic policies designed to further those who were disadvantaged under National Party rule do so to the detriment of those who benefited. Some of the disaffected who feel vulnerable from now competing in an open job market are drawn to Orania, although not the great numbers originally anticipated. More often, people who come to Orania feel socially rather than economically under pressure.

Whilst each aspect of the conversion of Afrikaans institutions into the dominant paradigm could be seen as a compromise required to accommodate others in a multicultural and multilingual society in the aftermath of conflict, cumulatively they can form a picture of marginalising Afrikaners. If there are no social institutions, apart from perhaps the Afrikaans churches, which retain their Afrikaans characters, then they will not contribute to future generations of children of Afrikaans descent being raised as Afrikaners. The argument is that if Afrikaans ceases to be a language of education, the arts, science and business then it will revert to being a kitchen language, the corrupted Dutch dialect that it was once viewed as. In this climate, picking up the ideology of separate nations but with the significant difference of applying the idea of an ethnic homeland to Afrikaners and not forcing it on others became a way of modifying the apartheid plan. With the post-apartheid

ideal of forming a unified South African society it was even more important to find a way to ensure the persistence of Afrikaans identity into the future. Orania is not simply a steadfast refusal to accept the way things now are and to retreat into the comfort and familiarity of the past, but in many respects it is a revision of the past to make a viable yet recognisable future. In the face of this tarnished identity and the weight of history attached to the symbols of their identity, separatism can be seen as more than just a refusal to engage. While one can reject the political or cultural aspects of a stigmatised identity, an identity with an ethnic basis is still visible in physical traits. Being caught on the wrong side of history is a public identity.

Although it is the best known, Orania is only one of several attempts at the establishment of a *volkstaat*. The interim constitution of 1993 allowed for a group to investigate the establishment of an Afrikaner *volkstaat*. The Volkstaatraad (*volkstaat* council) suggested many alternatives but was unable to propose a concrete plan for the implementation of an Afrikaner region. As people in Orania explained, since the Volkstaatraad could not come to an agreement, the government was not prepared to make the decision for them.

The settlements of Kleinfontein, outside of Pretoria, and Morgenzon and Balmoral, both in Mpumalanga, are other Afrikaans settlements whose objectives relate to Afrikaner self-determination. Morgenzon and Balmoral are less well known than Orania and Kleinfontein, with Morgenzon no longer an exclusively Afrikaans community. Kleinfontein and Orania regard each other as competitors for being viable *volkstate*. Kleinfontein is closer to the urban areas and requires less change of lifestyle and occupation to become part of the movement. It is close to Pretoria, the area with the largest number of Afrikaners, yet the population density of the region means its geographical spread can only ever be small. Orania's remoteness means that it requires a great degree of dedication for urban people to move there. It lacks many conveniences, but industries are encouraged to develop because there are so many needs that cannot otherwise be met.

## **LIMINAL PEOPLE**

Afrikaners are liminal in many aspects. They are both colonisers and colonised, though the Dutch East India Company (VOC) never formally colonised, and later subject to the colonial authority of the British Empire. Afrikaners sit amidst this puzzle of South African history as a group descended from continental Europeans from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They are both small and vulnerable in numbers but have dominated the history of their country. They consider themselves Africans and Europeans, but they are both of these and neither. As white Africans, they frequently assert difference despite sharing traits with other South Africans. Some Afrikaners claim to be the only white African tribe, as they now form a group who are proud of their language – which they share with coloured and also black South Africans. One current strategy to remove the stigma of Afrikaans identity is to embrace Afrikaans language in its broadest sense, finding common ground with all those whose mother tongue is Afrikaans. This means celebrating that a European language was created on African soil and soaked up influences from many of the language groups encountered. Among the more conservative Afrikaners, despite their group identification being based on being African, there is also a sense of identification as Europeans or westerners in Africa. Yet despite their European cultural origins, many Afrikaners seem not to share some elements of what Europeans would consider European. At the extreme, some of the twentieth century's shifts in thought: the social liberation of the 1960s, feminism, secularisation, and the end of the cold war are not the historical facts which they might seem from Europe.

That Afrikaners are in the position of having been formerly in power places them in a liminal political position in the present day also. For all the inevitability of the end of white hegemony, the transition to democracy produced many different responses. What interests me is what people do in the face of a paradigm shift. On the surface, politics, society, and history are reordered, changes come to the fore and others remain buried, but the loss of control is a significant change of status. The transition from National Party to African National Congress rule has created far-reaching changes in South Africa, especially for those who benefited from apartheid and are now set adrift. Orania is an ideal location for such a study, precisely because people there appear to go against the trend of contemporary South Africa.



The sign at the entrances to Orania



'Our ideal binds us together'

### **THE DEBATE ABOUT WHAT ORANIA'S SHARED PURPOSE ACTUALLY IS**

Carel Boshoff iv, a son of one of Orania's founders, Prof Carel, is a philosopher. He describes the people of European origin who first began to consider South Africa their home and the trekkers as the First Afrikaner. The Second Afrikaners were the generations which tried to sort the country's population into ethnic nations whilst grasping overall power for themselves. The Third Afrikaner is still coming into being. Carel iv argues that Orania is a contributor to this effort, even whilst it is creating its own identity as it develops. It can be a working example.

Apartheid rested on the assumption that people belonged to national entities, where ethnicity, culture, language, and religion aligned. Carel iv says that the time of the nation-state is clearly past, which is why the Third Afrikaner is a transient unformed concept. Yet the idea that Afrikaners exist as a group and that there is a heritage and culture that they can call their own persists. They may be South Africans but they remain Afrikaners. Orania uses this foundational premise to build a shared future. Both in its long-term plans and its everyday realities Orania is a place of debate, argument and sometimes friction. Whilst the residents who are there to contribute to the project of an Afrikaner future share this motivating belief, the uncut ground means that there is no template for success. There are historical lessons and examples from other places, and coincidences that are incorporated. If the shared premise for Orania is a certain amount of commonality, then the practice uncovers a multitude of differences. In implementing the plan of shaping the world to fit their

shared ideology, the differences in that ideology emerge. The premise is that people belong amongst their own kind: like should associate with like, but the practice throws into doubt what the basis of this likeness actually is.

Orania provides an option for people who are interested in building a future away from the dominant South African society. Being ideologically based and also a difficult environment in practical terms means that it draws people with ideas and resolve. The town being relatively new and unformed gives them space to be creative in implementing these ideas. The details of the implementation of ideas can be worked out gradually. There are very few people who visit the town without knowing it by reputation so it is hardly imaginable that anybody could move there without greater expectations of belonging to a like-minded community than other moves might bring. Are these initial expectations and the variation among them the start of the disunity of the town? People with vision and drive do not always share the same ideas, and this produces a creative tension in the building of this *volkstaat*, and can lead to conflict. Orania is a town that is the implementation of a political ideal, so not even geography unites them: coining the term *uitwoners* (literally out-habitants) means incorporating non-resident members of the group. To the extent that people in Orania share an ideal, they differ in their interpretations of what that world should look like. The town's newness means it sometimes lacks precedent, as historical precedent is not always the right pattern for the future.

Orania is a town that for all its tiny population is rich in variety. For every outspoken and defiant racist there is an open and inquiring mind. But more importantly, these same dualities, contextual differences and exceptions exist within individuals. In this thesis I will lay out the complexities of the town and the individuals who comprise it outside of the narrow framework provided for them, with the apparent and actual contradictions in all their ambivalence. This means going beyond the question about whether Orania is racist. In what sense can a town be racist? A town could be based on a racist premise despite its liberal ideologues, but equally, it could be liberal despite its racists. There are many more interesting things to discover about Orania's exceptional and also mundanely ordinary aspects.

Nevertheless, some of the people who this project attempts to understand from their own points of view would not accord the same right to others. At least one

person congratulated me on my decision to see for myself what Orania was like instead of accepting the received account, and then proceeded to tell me about the awful things 'out there'. There were people in Orania who insisted that their reasoning made sense but refused to consider that people who they disagreed with (ie. black people) were equally capable of reasoning. Here, the story is what this group of people in Orania feel, or rather, people within the various groupings in that town. Some of the things people said do not align with mainstream academic literature, for example, but are stated here because they are accounts from my informants.

After two decades Orania is growing and changing at a faster rate even than it did in the early years. Earlier inhabitants said that the conflict was even more intense at the beginning. The town's continuing existence means there must be more that holds it together than fractures it. Orania sometimes appears to be an ideal warm and supportive community, and at other times is riven by divisions, posing the question of what makes it function rather than splintering apart. Oraniërs are united by their attempt to create a recognisable future, making their surroundings conform to an idea. This project both assumes and requires a uniformity which they do not have. Yet even division is naturalised in a saying that was recounted several times: if there are two Afrikaners on an island, within a few days there will be three churches and four political parties.

One of the main arguments for an Afrikaans-only town is that the presence of another group with their own collective interests or opinions can challenge the existing character of the town. It is obviously impossible to deny this group the vote, so it is in the interests of all having a voice that they remain in (theoretically) homogeneous groups. Views vary on whether Orania should accept only those who uphold its philosophy, or hold out a hand to all Afrikaners. That is also what the space was created for. But if many of the Afrikaners who come to Orania come to escape the ethnically mixed South Africa, how can it be ensured that Orania retains its open-minded character whilst still being democratic? It is funny that this question still applies to Orania, albeit in a different way.

Orania is physically a strange combination of old and new, accidental and deliberate, but its social life also follows this pattern. Some aspects are the result of a

town created for a specific ideal, others based on the individuals who live there, or simply due to being a small remote town. One could say that Orania is a town that does not yet know what it is. This is not for want of definitions and intentions, but because none has yet overridden others. The town draws many different kinds of people: some ideologues, some of milder opinions, but very few without opinions. Whilst people may claim that Orania is a certain way, the nature of the town and its trajectory into the future are matters of constant debate.

The legacy of apartheid is ever-present in South Africa, with the social categories on which it was built still significant in designating privilege that is earned and that which is unearned. Afrikaners as a group presided over a system which split the society into racial categories, and aimed to separate them geographically. In practice, this latter plan involved assigning the attractive central urban areas as white areas, and outlying areas as black. It also meant ascribing convenient public amenities as for the use of whites only, and less easily accessed park benches, buses or toilets as for non-whites. These principles were also overlooked when it proved inconvenient for the interests of whites, which led to the migrant labour system which allowed non-whites to live in urban areas but often without their families.

The plight of South Africans under the tyranny of the apartheid regime was one of the prominent moral causes of the latter half of the twentieth century. It seems easy to know that apartheid was a system of racial oppression whose lack of logic and humanity was only outstripped by its logistical and economic impracticality. Apartheid has become a by-word for legislated inequality and crimes against humanity. When the term apartheid is invoked, everyone knows where they stand on it. The stories of individual suffering, of broken families and curtailed potential resulting from apartheid are endless and not to be overlooked. The point is rather to listen to the views of a group of people who are crucial to the present and future state of South Africa, and whose case is not usually heard with an open analytic mind because the influence of recent history and politics is inevitably so strong. The meaning of historical events is dependent on interpretation, and with apartheid, the whole perspective on the twentieth century depends on whether people are seen to have acted in good faith or in bad faith, and this interpretation has significant political implications in contemporary South Africa.



In this thesis I will focus on Orania, in which case the situating information is predominantly about Afrikaners and their positioning in South Africa. Whilst Oraniërs are Afrikaners, not all Afrikaners are sympathetic towards Orania. I encountered urban white South Africans who distanced themselves from Orania, assuming it to be an extremist enclave, but their own views and behaviour were not very different from those I encountered in Orania. The presence of a visible 'other' can allow people to view themselves as more open-minded. Orania obviously does not represent all Afrikaners, indeed, a very small but possibly growing minority, yet it has a symbolic power and influence beyond its members and size. What is considered marginal and distanced from the mainstream helps to define the position of that mainstream. That is why looking at Orania, an ostensible fringe group trying to help sustain and guide the whole, is important.

In investigating Orania, we can look at the reasons for its existence and persistence, its dynamics, its logic and illogic. There is a tension within Orania that shapes the town, between ideas and implementation, and between different ideas about what the town should be like.

### **ETHNIC DIFFERENTIATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The premise of an Afrikaner homeland implies that ethnicity is innate, and yet, in practice, the boundaries and what they are intended to contain are imprecise. Is Orania, in pursuing cultural separation, trapped by some of the same flawed assumptions that meant apartheid could not work? John Sharp explains that many *volkekundiges* whose work substantiated apartheid worked on the assumption that people exist in idealised *volk* units in the manner of German romanticism (Sharp 1980:4-5). Aside from kinship, social institutions are treated as properties of specific cultures.

Not only do its political, religious and economic institutions fit together to form a harmonious cultural whole, but each is a unique manifestation of the nature of the ethnos in question. Politics and economics are dealt with, therefore, as matters of the internal organization of an ethnos rather than as processes which occur between ethnoses as well (ibid.:3).

For Sharp, even recognising cultural differences between people does not imply that those boundaries offer the primary grounds for identities: “the existence of real cultural differences does not inevitably lead to the use of ethnicity as a principle of group mobilization” (Sharp 1980:9).

Critiques of separation precede apartheid, arguing that South Africa was already a single society where each ethnic group could not be disentangled from and understood as independent from the whole (Schapera 1928, Gluckman, 1940, Gluckman 1947, Gordon 1990). During A.R. Radcliffe-Brown’s stay in South Africa beginning in 1921, he “stressed that South African society was already so interconnected and complex that a policy of segregation was unworkable” (Gordon 1990:19). He argued that studying groups as though they were bounded units was impossible (Gordon 1990). Isaac Schapera (1928) substantiates this by illustrating that the way the traditional hierarchical social structure in the eastern part of the Cape Province functioned was undermined by the introduction of such things as trade and wage labour. The desire for material goods and the means for attaining them were introduced into the traditional Zulu lifestyles, affecting the relationship of the people to their chiefs. Max Gluckman explains: “[a]n alteration in one relation (eg. the relation of early Nguni population to land) introduces unresolvable conflicts of inequality into the equilibrium and produces changes of pattern” (1940:168). They could not be understood without reference to the broader social system of which they had become a part, and which had changed the nature of the group. Schapera argues that already during the later nineteenth century African society was differentiated between those who lived effectively traditional lifestyles, and those who were all but assimilated into European lifestyles, with most lying between the extremes. In that case, “[a]ny attempt to deal with all these different classes as a single unity is doomed to failure” (Schapera 1928:188).

Gluckman (1940) makes the same point, describing the ways in which the white and Zulu groups were dependent upon each other, even while they were often in conflict.

Fission and fusion are not only present in the histories of individual groups and relationships; they are inherent in the nature of a social structure. Thus every social group was defined by its not being some other social group, usually formed on the same pattern, and by its acting

as a group only in a situation when it stood opposed to the other. Therefore it depended for its strength on the latent conflict between them (Gluckman 1940:169).

Through this, he disputes the position put forward by Malinowski, that conflict is distinct from other processes of culture contact: conflict is interaction which also allows boundary definition (Gluckman 1947:11).

In some respects Orania's premise is problematic: a *volkstaat* suggests that a *volk* is a self-evident and clearly defined grouping. However, in practice, Orania's relationship with the outside world for both definition of its aims and identity and the exchange of material goods is not considered problematic by residents, as the town need not be insular in order to differentiate itself. For Sharp (1996), a distinction can be made between groups asserting difference in accordance with their power relations, because in asserting cultural continuity with the past, vulnerable minorities are likely to be aware of the problematic nature of the past. In asserting an identity that was previously used by others to denigrate them, indigenous minorities seeking to empower themselves are different from Afrikaner separatists, who

cannot dismiss, and must not be allowed to dismiss, ... the fact that their protestations of primordial unity, and of fundamental difference from others, are utterly unreflexive and entirely lacking in any noticeable appreciation that the past, by which they set such store, is always an ambiguous resource. ... [T]hey do not see that the past may, indeed, be a heritage, but that it is also, at the same time, a burden that is heavy to carry (ibid.:103).

Yet both of these points, on the sharpness of the boundary between Orania and the world outside it, and Afrikaners' relationship to their past and therefore the present situation of South Africa, are matters of tension in Orania, as we shall see throughout the thesis. Nevertheless, the impression of homogeneity and shared interests persists in the face of these disagreements.

Fredrik Barth's (1969) approach to understanding ethnic groups focuses on the boundaries, on what elements of identity are emphasised in which situations to dichotomise self and other. The emphasis is less on objective degrees of difference between groups or similarities between individuals to define group membership, but on allegiance by individuals and their recognition by others as belonging to a particular group. This recognition of who is like or unlike, in which respects and in

what circumstances, is vital in understanding South African society, due to the many ethnic groups and the alliances, animosities and ambiguities between them.

Investigating the increase in anti-immigration rhetoric in Europe despite the decline in explicit racism since the Second World War, Verena Stolcke (1995) traces the way what she terms ‘cultural fundamentalism’ has taken its place as an idiom for exclusion of people considered different. The reasoning that she analyses takes the following form:

Humans by their nature are bearers of culture. But humanity is composed of a multiplicity of distinct cultures which are incommensurable, the relations between their respective members being inherently conflictive because it is in human nature to be xenophobic. An alleged human universal – people’s natural propensity to reject strangers – accounts for cultural particularism (Stolcke 1995:7)

In naturalising people’s distrust or fear of strangers, their affinity towards people similar to themselves is explained by reference to an allegedly innate inclination – even if there are empirical examples which demonstrate that this is not the case (ibid.:6). Furthermore, “[i]nstead of ordering different cultures hierarchically, cultural fundamentalism segregates them spatially, each culture in its place” (ibid.:8), reflecting a parallel in the way Europe and the way apartheid conceived of cultural difference. In this way, the essentialisation of biological differences is replaced with an emphasis on the naturalness of separation of cultures.

Manifestations of identity politics take place within wider political contexts, where particular movements may be connected to international trends, and indeed, cannot be separated from them. The problematic nature of asserting claims of primordial ethnic identities in pursuit of separatism has long been established in South African anthropology, but occurs in and borrows from other contexts.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

The terminology that is used for groups of people is always problematic in discussion of South Africa. The term non-white, although far from ideal politically, will be used in this discussion when referring collectively to black, coloured and Indian South Africans, and indeed other people in general, since it is both a less cumbersome way of referring to the same groups of people, but more to the point – it is the negative

rather than the positive definition that is frequently of import when discussing white or Afrikaans identity as it identifies where Oraniërs identify boundaries around the group, making non-Afrikaans is an equally pertinent term of exclusion, denoted by the Afrikaans term *volksvreemdes*.

The frequent discussion of black people as the other is intriguing since in the immediate area of Orania the majority of people are coloured. Sometimes black is used collectively to refer to black and coloured people, and for geographical and perhaps other reasons, Indian South Africans rarely come into the frame of reference. Sometimes people used the term black to refer to the coloured people in the vicinity of Orania, sometimes it referred to black people in Gauteng, where many people originated. In practice, nuanced differences can be described in relation to the group to which one belongs, whilst groups of others can be generalised about and assumed to be undifferentiated. The term English is also very confusing, even though some of this confusion is inherent in its public use, and thus part of the essence of the matter of boundary definition. While the actual meaning of the term is crucial, it is used to refer to English-speaking South Africans, people from England, and native English speakers from anywhere in the world.

The purpose of my ethnographic research on Orania is to discover what remains, despite much attention, hidden. The town has a well-intentioned and warm heart which is no less a part of it than the fears and discriminations which draw attention to it. Apart from the fact that its reputation is what makes research about Orania interesting, it is prominent enough that anonymisation would be as ineffectual as it would be pointless. Revealing things, however, is both interesting and fraught since it lays bare information and connections, which is why anonymisation and pseudonyms can be useful. The small population and media coverage means that pseudonyms cannot be reliable protection for individuals. With this in mind, I have written using people's real names and identities. A previous study of Afrikaners by an anthropologist, Vincent Crapanzano's *Waiting: The Whites of South Africa* (1985) painted a very detailed picture of a town which he gave the pseudonym Wyndal. The specificities about the town meant that it was readily identifiable and therefore that the people about whom he writes under the cover of anonymity are also identifiable. The details Crapanzano revealed in his book "caused irreparable damage in the

family life of his informants” (Skalnik in Boonzaier et al. 1985:68). It is not the information that Crapanzano revealed to the outside world which caused damage, but what was revealed by residents of the community to each other. For this reason, some things in this thesis are written without any contextual information about their source, and other details have not been included in the study so as to avoid as far as possible interfering in people’s lives, but I have not used pseudonyms. I have included information which was provided in a public setting or is well-known in the community even if it does not present people in the way they would ideally like.

## **EXISTING LITERATURE**

For a small town in the desert, Orania receives much attention in the media. It is visited by journalists from all over the world, by whom it is regarded as a byword for regressive racism, although this view is gradually changing to appreciate Orania’s positive side. People in Orania are very hesitant towards journalists because it frequently occurs that the published account of Orania is harshly negative, in contrast to how the journalists appeared to enjoy their visit. Despite this, they remain surprisingly open to journalists, hoping again and again for understanding. Manie Opperman, a retired archaeology professor coordinates research in the town and is very supportive of attempts to study Orania.

Although Orania was established two decades ago and has generated much interest in South Africa, there have been no previous long-term studies of the town. Several theses and articles have looked at certain aspects of the town. Terisa Pienaar’s (2007) thesis investigates the origins and precursors of the *volkstaat* concept and also assesses the feasibility of Orania as the growth point for a *volkstaat*. In discussing the variety of motivations people gave for moving to Orania, the difficulty individuals have in being independent and self-reliant, and *volkstaters* being viewed as a fringe minority, she concludes that without a more concerted effort, Orania is unlikely to become a viable *volkstaat* (ibid.).

Lindi Todd (2008) includes Orania as a case study in her study of the development of Afrikaner identity after apartheid. In looking at the process of coming to terms with the past she notes the way people, groups, and narratives were evaluated as authentic or inauthentic in light of whether they choose the route of

separatism or assimilation into the new South Africa (2008:238). Whilst Oraniërs I met observed that a lot of Afrikaners did not realise the importance of a territorial community, people did not frame this in terms of authenticity, with a few atypical exceptions. This retelling of the past took place in the context of the period of dramatic change that followed the overhaul of apartheid legislation.

Liesel Blomerus (2009) focuses on the cultural content of women's identities in Orania. She points out that the context of enculturation plays a role in their self-consciously Afrikaner identities. Blomerus concludes that families raise women to be daughters, wives and mothers, to support patriarchal structures and defer to their fathers and husbands. Blomerus argues that women are viewed as the bearers of a Christian Afrikaans culture within the family (ibid.:195-6).

Lise Hagen's thesis (2013) addresses concepts of space and place in and around Orania. She connects the importance of territory for the *volk* ideology with the way people experience their surroundings in Orania. The harshness of the rural semi-desert surroundings and the contrasting artificiality of Orania as a holiday destination is just one of the ways in which the physical context for Orania's community is significant rather than simply backdrop (Hagen 2013:189). Hagen also provides the most extensive review of literature relating to Orania (ibid.:28-38).

F.C. de Beer's (2006) article is an informative overview of the town, but of limited scope. His work naturalises the desire for expression of ethnic identity and does so from within a mainstream conservative Afrikaner perspective. Several further journal articles use Orania as an example or case study. Mads Vestergaard (2001) discusses diverging notions of what an Afrikaner is, using Orania as an example of a separatist identity perpetuating an orthodox, as opposed to heterodox stream of Afrikaans identity. Pieter Labuschagne (2008) looks at the legal status of a potential *volkstaat*, and Orania's present state, and outlines a way in which Orania could proceed towards autonomy. Nico Kotze (2003) and Edward Cavanagh (2013) look at the land on which Orania now sits, at its economic use and its ownership, respectively.

There is further research about Orania that I was unable to access. People in the town occasionally referred to researchers they had met, but were not always able to provide more information. The curators of the town's archives said that copies of

theses on Orania were held at the Orania Beweging, but the Orania Beweging did not have copies, insisting they were held at the archives.

## **METHODS**

The methods of my research were partly intentional and partly accidental. I took part in the events of the community, attending the meetings, events and church services, and generally milling about. I tried to avoid expecting to find certain attitudes or structures, and asked questions about topics as they arose rather than pursuing pre-determined themes. As a result, there were some questions that never arose, or stories that were related in ways that did surprise me, so this thesis reflects those omissions.

Whilst participant observation is a fairly inquisitive method, I tried to interfere as little as possible. I learnt a lot at people's kitchen tables but these were spaces to which I had limited access. I was conscious of the fact that maintaining good relations in a very small town for a period of fifteen months can be a delicate political balance, so I had to ensure that I respected people's privacy and that they did not find me intrusive.

I went to Pretoria in September 2009, spending ten weeks taking Afrikaans classes, before moving to Orania in mid-December. I was based in the town until February 2011, apart from two months travelling around South Africa, which helped me gain some understanding of the broader social context and regional differences, and a month in Pretoria.

## **LANGUAGE**

I effectively started learning Afrikaans upon arrival in Pretoria in September 2009, where I took intensive classes for ten weeks. My fluency increased throughout the year and a half, with all communication in Afrikaans by around March 2010.

Learning Afrikaans was vital for understanding what people said to each other, but was also important in signalling my dedication to understanding Orania. It seems in this respect my efforts were appreciated and my Afrikaans skills praised. Whilst there were problems with conducting research in my third language, I was surprised at the relative ease and clarity with which we were able to communicate. Perhaps



people explained themselves more clearly because they did not automatically expect me to understand. I received copies of speeches where possible and often asked for clarity on church sermons. That said, there is an inconsistency inherent in my research on account of my understanding of Afrikaans improving over the course of fieldwork.

Very few conversations were recorded, so as to make the fact of my analysing conversations as unobtrusive as possible, so I only record people's words in quotation marks where I am fairly sure those are the words that were used. These precise words are, however, translated from Afrikaans. Afrikaans abbreviations are used throughout the thesis because not all terms are properly translatable, and some terms such as *volk* remain.

### NATIONALITY

In South Africa, at least among Afrikaners, the important distinction between English-speaking people, English-speaking South Africans and English people is blurred by the common adjective of *Engels* (English). Since I know this distinction to be politically important, I insisted upon being Australian, although on some occasions I was considered English enough to be viewed as English in a negative sense, rather than anything more nuanced. This is at the same time as the locals insist on their identities as Afrikaners, sometimes as opposed to being South African, sometimes as a subset of the latter. Sometimes I was considered English and therefore other, other times Australian was considered kindred to being Afrikaans, other times again Australian was still not Afrikaans, so I could not be expected to understand.

Orania has much experience with outsiders, with curious tourists and a flow of journalists through the town. Oraniërs show the town to people so that they can understand, but the output of that media frequently shows that they do not understand Orania in the way that its inhabitants want them to. It was important that I was staying a long time, marking a difference between myself and the superficial journalistic view that they were accustomed to.

## SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL POSITIONING

Before my arrival I was put in touch with the Coetsees, who operate the Oewerpark (riverbank park). The Oewerpark complex includes holiday cottages, and they were building a small one-room house which would be ideal for me. There were several other people who lived full-time at the Oewerpark, including Karin's mother and André's sister and her daughter. This meant that the Coetsees were both my hosts and neighbours. I was welcomed into their house, which was literally always open, and frequently ate with them. *Braais* after church on Sundays included members of the extended family. I learnt a lot from being attached to their household and that of their daughter Tanja and her husband Johan. I was touched at how welcome I felt, that I was often considered part of the family.

I arrived in Orania on December 18<sup>th</sup>, because I attended the Geloftedag (Day of the Covenant) celebrations on the 16<sup>th</sup> at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. During June and July I took some time off and explored South Africa, including experiencing the friendly and hopeful solidarity of the World Cup. I stayed at the Oewerpark until October 2010, at which time I moved into the centre of town. The river is 500m from the edge of the original town and sometimes on the periphery of activities, although during the holidays it is the centre. Moving into town introduced me to some different circles and weakened the feeling of me being part of the Oewerpark community.

Much of life was lived within families and households. I was sometimes incorporated into family circles but other times excluded, so this limited my access to people's confidence. I thus had limited access to most spheres, and none to the rest. I attended as many of the public activities and meetings as I could. Whether I met people was often coincidental, or it depended on the degree they participated in public activities. There were also very few births or baptisms, weddings, and funerals during the time I was there, so I was not able to observe these rituals.

There were also times when I was outside the circle. A line was drawn and sometimes I was unquestionably inside it, other times I was excluded, always leaving my positioning unstable. But this occurred often in Orania, sometimes I felt so far inside the town's big heart and other times I was forgotten. Kindred as I may sometimes have been considered, I was not an Afrikaner. There were people who

saw me as a contributing part of the community and valued my participation, and others who were suspicious of me. By the end of my stay these were still both true. A man visiting relatives in the town said there would be a great hole in the community after I left. Yet on the town's website there were photos from the leaving party I held, with a caption stating 'this is an anthropologist who has been living in Orania for 15 months, and we do not yet know what she will write about us'. Busy and omnipresent as I seemed to be sometimes, there were always people who I did not know and for all Orania's information networks, who did not know that there was an anthropologist living in the town. I often felt I was the last in town to hear what was going on.

### TIME CONSTRAINTS

Orania has a strong philosophy of labour, both as a matter of principle and as a practicality. I considered getting a job but did not do so because I needed to remain flexible. The fact that I did not have a job meant I was perceived as unoccupied, some people did not consider my research occupation as real work (whereas others perhaps overestimated its value). I was not able to engage with people as a colleague, which is another variety of local, but this would have drawn my focus to a narrower area of the community, with both benefits and drawbacks. As it was I had more freedom to my time, and was able to meet with people at times convenient for them – it was often extremely difficult to find a time to talk to certain people. Due to working hours I could not talk with people during the day without feeling I was bothering them, and in the evenings without intruding on their private domestic activities, which limited me to certain people who could talk and work at the same time or were not employed with regular hours. The radio was a major source of local information but I was unable to listen to it all the time.

## **II: WELCOME TO ORANIA – PAINTING THE TOWN ORANGE**

Orania occupies a place in the South African imagination, yet not much is known about it, so in this chapter I will provide a description of the town and outline the questions that follow from its composition.

Journalists and visitors regularly pass through the town, yet there have been few attempts to go beyond the stereotype and understand the town in its complexity. The perception of Orania in the wider South Africa is that it is a town of people who cannot face the ending of apartheid and embrace the rainbow nation; it is a by-word for retrogressive racism. The term ‘enclave’ is used (Enoch 2013), and the common introduction of Carel Boshoff as the son-in-law of Verwoerd, the ‘architect’ of apartheid, means that Orania is directly associated with the old hard-line racial oppression that Verwoerd evokes in most people’s minds (Haynes 2010, McNally 2010).

At the surface, it is the skin colour of Orania’s inhabitants that draws most attention. Or rather, not the colour itself, but the implications of an African town without black Africans in it, only white African residents of continental European origin. It indicates an exclusionary boundary around those who reserved privilege for themselves in the past that is expected not to exist anymore. As will become clear, Orania is the result of the intertwining of the intentionality of its founders and residents, and the contingency of existing structures, practicalities, and accident. The town produces interesting social dynamics through being both a rural community and an ideologically-based creation which brings together very different people on the premise that they share fundamental values and ways of being.

### **TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED**

The fact Orania is much more vibrant than it is usually depicted was amply illustrated during the course of my first day there. I had arrived by bus from Pretoria late the previous evening, having been unsure whether my message had been passed on and whether I would be picked up from the stop in Hopetown. En route, the bus

driver, who was coloured, asked why I was going to Hopetown, since it was the most godforsaken place on Earth. I admitted that I was actually going to Orania. He was incredulous but agreed it was worth visiting, and wished me luck.

Daniël, the son of André and Karin Coetsee who run the Oewerpark (river bank park), the accommodation complex by the river, collected me from the bus. He told me the next day he and his friends would be riding their motorbikes on the jumps they made, and invited me to come and watch. On waking the next morning I discovered that my new home had a view directly onto the Orange River, which I had been unable to see in the dark. The Oewerpark grounds were lush and watered and full of holiday makers. I met André at their house to which the central reception was attached, and met two daughters, Jana, then 15, and Lize, then 12, and was told that I would later meet Tanja, 25, but the eldest, Derik, lived in Cape Town. André explained that they were going to spend much of the day at the racetrack, and then in the evening there was a community concert, to which I was welcome to come. The oval track where the car racing would take place was next to the dirt bike jump circuit. Since André had some things to do he would not go till later, and so Lize and I were to make our way there. Lize took out the ‘bugster’, and so by mid-morning I was seeing the sights of Orania for the first time, being driven around town by a 12 year old – in a go-kart. We arrived at the jump circuit to find teenage boys and girls riding motorbikes and chatting in the dusty desert heat.

Nearby, the car racing was getting underway. People were starting to gather at the edge of the track, the circuit set into the ground. It was not only the car engines which were modified, but the bodies appeared to be made by hand so the panels were mostly flat with sharp corners. Most had roll cages and only a driver’s seat. Occasionally a car would drive a few laps, kicking up dust and grit. A truck with a water tank and sprinkler on the back drove around to settle the grey dust. Over the course of the next few hours they raced a few heats and then a final race, although the overwhelming impression from the sidelines was that nobody knew much what was going on. Sometimes in the breaks between car races the motorcyclists would run some laps.

That day by the race track I met several people who I would engage with over the course of my time in Orania. A man who introduced himself as Wynand asked

me about my research, and about irrigation and agriculture in Australia. He asked whether I was religious since he had heard churches were not very well attended in Australia, but said he did not think my lack of religiosity would be a problem in my fitting in in Orania. He told me about his PhD thesis, in which he was arguing that schools should provide more vocational education that can be practically applied in the workplace. I later discovered he was one of Prof Carel Boshoff's sons, that he was one of the more intellectual and radical minds of the town, and who would avoid wearing shoes if he possibly could.

Sila, married to Karin Coetsee's sister Annelize, told me that they had lived in Cape Town. But although it is a beautiful and vibrant city, the kids could surf every day if they wanted to and he had a good job, they had still moved back to Orania. The lifestyle in Orania is just *lekker*, which he illustrated by indicating the leisurely Saturday we were enjoying. One of the more common Afrikaans words is *lekker*, which is an adjective to indicate a positive experience, for more or less anything from food to a journey to weather. Sila and his family have relatives in Orania through his wife's mother and four sisters and their families, and they are among their own people.

After a day of hot sun and the desert dust sticking to our sweaty skin, the freshly washed town turned out at the community concert. Through my lingering exhaustion from the bus ride I was impressed by the talented singers this town had, until the discrepancy between the motions of the musicians and the sounds from the loudspeakers became apparent. At one point the audio cut out altogether, taking several minutes to restore. In the interval I pondered the apparent absurdity of an audience watching people pretend to sing pop songs, but realised the point was precisely the fact of the members of the community being together. The concert was organised by the women's society, the Kaalvoet Vrouens. At the end there was a vote on the best performance but also a fundraising collection. They were raising money for a university. For a town whose population was less than 800 and that takes five minutes to drive from its outer reaches to the other side by go-kart, this expressed considerable faith in the future.

## **PROMINENT GUESTS**

One Tuesday in January 2010 I was cycling around town, and happened to stop in at the Orania Beweging. John Strydom stuck his head out and called me into his office. Desmond Tutu, he said, was arriving in half an hour. Tutu was presenting a promotional film about South Africa for World Cup tourism, and the visit to Orania had been kept quiet so that no journalists would be there to interrupt their schedule. John said that if I considered myself an Oraniër I should wear something orange. I admitted that I had an orange top which was presently in the wash. Over the course of the next half hour there were many bits of news about when Tutu would be arriving by helicopter from Kimberley, and eventually people made their way to the *gemeenskapsaal*. After waiting about a quarter of an hour, with the twenty or so people searching out the little strips of shade in the searing heat, a helicopter approached. In another bit of curious coincidence, Orania already had a helipad, though whether it was adapted for President Nelson Mandela's visit in 1995 or whether it was another relic of the waterworks days, I am not sure. The helicopter descended, spitting dry bits of desert foliage and kicking up dust, which stuck to all our sweaty limbs. As the rotors slowed, the doors opened, and gradually a smiling pink-clad figure emerged, with Prof Carel, Lida Strydom and the then-mayor Martin Kemp going forward to meet him. For me, Prof Carel and Archbishop Tutu shaking hands provided the impression simply of a meeting of two old men of the church. Tutu shook hands with the people present, and I wondered what was going through his head, since *he was in Orania!*, that famed Afrikaner enclave, and also not knowing that the twenty or so gathered to welcome him included a Brazilian, a German, and an Australian. After some introductions, the people who were to meet with Tutu were taken with him to the *monumentkoppie* by the film crew, while the rest of us were sent to meet them at the Verwoerd museum. The *monumentkoppie* refers to a rocky outcrop (*koppie*) along the ridge through the town, just beside the community hall, where a crescent of statue busts stand on pedestals.

While we had been waiting for the helicopter, one of Lida's daughters had a book about South African historical figures, which included a biography of Desmond Tutu. Bruno, a visiting Brazilian student, had said something about the freedom

fighters having facts on their side. The girl replied that ‘we have facts on our side too.’

Lida’s summary of the visit afterwards was as follows. She suggested that the whole occasion had been carefully stage managed by the film’s crew. They had seemingly arranged to meet the rest of the Orania group at the Verwoerd museum in order to shake them off while they took photos at the *monumentkoppie*, so that they could focus on the meeting between Desmond Tutu and Carel Boshoff. Those of us waiting at the museum were later informed that the group had run out of time and headed straight to the guest house for discussions and afternoon tea. Lida was livid about the fact that although she and a few others who were part of the Orania contingent who were talking with Tutu, they were told to sit away from the table, and she, as the only woman, was asked to get more *koeksisters* for the crew. They had experience with many film crews, but none so rude as this. She was also unimpressed with Tutu, who had, in her view, told them that ethnic separatism was wrong, without having listened to their views. He talked about apartheid ‘in his experience’, which could not be disputed, even if what he was saying misrepresented what she considered to be the facts.

In September 2010 Lida told me that the following day, President Jacob Zuma would be visiting Orania. Although there had been some thought put into the visit, it was only confirmed at very short notice. The following morning I was prevented from driving up to the Gemeenskapsaal by a contingent of policemen, until Manie Opperman told them I was an anthropologist and that being there for the president’s visit was *integral* to my research. Only a few people had been invited, in addition to others who had specific roles relating to the visit, such as Tannie Elise who had prepared the food, and the fire truck – a few men in a pale blue *bakkie* with some fire extinguishers on the back.

While Prof Carel and Jacob Zuma were talking over coffee and delicacies in the room where one of the churches normally hold their services, everybody else was chatting around the front entrance of the building. I spoke to Dr Johan Combrink, who said he was treating Prof Carel. He knew Jacob Zuma through his involvement with ANC politics in KwaZulu Natal, and had told him that if he wanted to see his



old friend again, he had to do so now. Prof Carel and Zuma had met in the early 1990s during the transition phase. In other words, this inevitably politicised visit was predominantly a personal visit.

I spoke to an African journalist based in Bloemfontein, eager to hear her thoughts on Orania. She said this was her second visit, and she had been well-received. The whole contingent, including the minibus with journalists and Oraniërs, drove around the town. At the occasional stops it was affecting to see that President Zuma and Prof Carel were holding hands. I was told that holding hands is common in friendships between black African men.

At the discussion which followed the visit, Prof Carel said he was conscious of how little there was to show compared to townships even, but he was proud nonetheless. Zuma had spoken to the cameras without saying anything in particular, in accordance with his job as a politician, but it was Orania that was in control of the visit – in contrast with the visit from Desmond Tutu.

At the weekly information meeting the next morning Lida explained that fresh flowers were hard to come by in the Karoo at short notice. The flowers which had decorated the room in which the meeting between President Zuma and Prof Carel took place were borrowed from the Verwoerd monument in Orania's cemetery where Betsie Verwoerd is buried, there for the anniversary of Hendrik Verwoerd's assassination on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

Hopefully this indicates that Orania is more interesting than nearby towns similar to it. It may be ordinary in terms of everyday life, but extraordinary in terms of the recognition they receive for what they are attempting, which is a success of sorts.



The map at the entry to the *grootdorp*



The main entrance to the *grootdorp* from the R369



Orania's unique road signs



The community hall on top of the hill, with the rugby pitch, circled by a dusty athletics track, in the foreground.



One of the Bushman rock engravings on the rise between the community hall and the river

### **SETTING THE SCENE**

Driving down the N1 from Pretoria, by the time you get to Bloemfontein you are two thirds of the way there – only 250 kilometres to go. After turning west onto the N8, you turn off on to successively smaller roads where the tall grass reaches the edges of the chipped bitumen and after the sun is finally below the horizon and out of your eyes, you have to slow down so that you have more braking time in case a *bok* (deer) jumps out in front of the car. By the time you get to Koffiefontein with its extraordinary coffee pot fountain in the town centre, it's only 100 to go. The curious long curves in the otherwise straight road take you past Luckhoff, and eventually you wind through the rocky hills to reach the Havenga Bridge which crosses the Orange River. You are finally in the Northern Cape, and almost home. The road winds north-west, then northwards. Every ridge feels like it should reveal the small lights of Orania, and eventually one of them does. The town sits astride a ridge, with much of the town nestled against its curve, some with a view from atop it, and the cluster of houses built for coloured workers in the water works days on the other side of the slope, just out of sight.

Orania is bisected by the R369 highway, separating the main part of the town, sometimes called the *grootdorp*, or big town, from Orania west, which was mostly taken down after the water works left, leaving concrete house foundations among the grass, and some houses. Nowadays it has many brand new houses and building sites,

as do many previously vacant plots in the rest of the town. During the 1960s the Orange River scheme was instigated by the government, comprising two dams on the Orange River and various irrigation canal networks. Towns were built to house construction workers and Orania was one of these, although the canals on the side of the river where Orania is were never completed.

Beside the highway is the central activity cluster of the town, with the petrol station and car workshops beside the supermarket complex, including the recent highlight of the town, the coffee shop. Beside Afsaal café you can buy clothes and souvenirs of Orania or the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Trek in 1988, get a drink, wash your car, and explore the oddities for purchase at the stationers. This area of town is also home to the Orania Beweging (the Orania Movement), the organisation which originally purchased the town. There is a gate by the entrance to the *grootdorp*, but this gate is a waist-height frame that supports some wire meshing, it is a break in the fence that lines the eastern side of the R369. There are boom gates on either side of the highway, on the western side they stand alone on the grass. I believe I only saw them closed once.

The several centres of the town's entertainment include the Oewerpark (riverbank park), which is the camping, four star hotel and restaurant complex, but also serves as a well-facilitated public space. On a hot Saturday in summer the town's residents can be found *braaiing* (barbecueing) by the car racing track, getting dust in their food from the occasional dust cloud kicked up by the home-built cars. The lawn beside the swimming pool is also full, and in the evenings concerts and other events are held at the community hall (*gemeenskapsaal*) on the hill.

Since the town was originally built by the Department of Water Affairs in the midst of apartheid's golden era of the 1960s, the social geography of the time is still reflected in Orania's contemporary layout. The main part of the town, the two parts of which lie on either side of the R369, comprise large rectangular blocks of land, houses are all one of four or five different layouts, mostly placed at an angle on the block, and made of fibre cement sheeting and corrugated iron roofing, and some now have a brick veneer. This part of the town sits below a ridge, on top of which lie several utility buildings, and the plans for further streets are sketched into the landscape. Further ahead there are factories and warehouses, a few old but many

recent, and at the bottom of the following slope begin the smaller plots and the dormitory buildings which originally housed coloured workers and families. Apartheid was implemented through the geographical organisation of society. In most cases, the centres of towns and cities were designated as residential areas for white people with black or coloured townships at the edges, at a safe but serviceable distance. Thus, Orania's own history prior to its establishment as a *volkstaat* is reflected in there being a section with smaller allotments over the ridge from the principal part of the town, which is known as Kleingeluk ('small fortune/luck'). Beside the road leading to Kleingeluk is a small easily overlooked building which was once a watch-house to survey the coloured workers' hostels. Although the present day worker's hostel Elim covers a large part of this section of the town, it is incorrect to consider Kleingeluk solely working class, since a few of the Orania officials do or have lived in this part. Many houses in the *grootdorp* have garages converted into flats which provide cheaper accommodation for single people and young couples.

During the Water Works time a competition was held to name the town, which was won by a man with a curiously English name. The name Orania, reminiscent of the Dutch royal house, is ideally suited to Orania's present existence as a proto-*volkstaat* but actually preceded it by several decades, presumably just indicating that the town lies beside the Orange River. This combination of contingency and intentionality runs right through Orania.

### **A TOUR OF THE TOWN**

At the corner beside the swimming pool on the way to the Gemeenskapsaal, there is a carefully tended garden with a statue in the middle of a circle of gravel. Its shape is a three-segment plait, which is the traditional form of a *koeksister*, although most *koeksisters* including those in Orania are normally two-part twists and a longer shape than that of the statue. *Koeksisters* are made from a dough which is shaped and deep-fried. The hot *koeksisters* are then dipped in a cold syrup which is soaked up to make them almost liquid inside.





Orania's koeksister monument



The plaque on the base of the monument

The twisted sandstone structure appears on closer inspection to be made of something different, and tapping it reveals it to be fibreglass. A plaque at the base explains:

*Koeksisters* originally come from Indonesia, made Afrikaans by Cape slaves, so that it is meanwhile seen as a traditional Afrikaans treat. According to legend *koeksisters* refer to two spinsters who sit on a *stoep* (porch/patio) and gossip pleasantly. It can also indicate the *koek* (cake) that sisses as it is dunked in the syrup.

We see the *koeksister* as a symbol of the responsibility and determination of Afrikaner women who through the decades baked *koeksisters* in order to fund the building of schools, churches, orphanages etc.

The tradition of a group that bakes *koeksisters* together also indicates that we Afrikaner women can effect much through cooperation.

I had been told previously that *koeksisters*, typically Afrikaans as they were, probably had Malay origins, but that this view was tantamount to heresy and I should definitely not mention it in Orania. In fact, their foreign origin was openly acknowledged in the process of paying tribute to the role that women who made them played in their communities. Although most Oraniërs probably consider it amusing to effectively have a memorial to bake sale products rather than taking it too seriously, the *koeksister* monument was installed by a group called the Kaalvoet

Vrouens (Barefoot women), a name which recalls the *voortrekker* women who it is said would have preferred to walk barefoot over the Drakensberg than to live under British rule (see Giliomee 2003a:169).

On the other side of the road from the *koeksister* monument, the rocky scrub rises to a point in the ridge that runs through Orania. There are a series of pedestals arranged in a semi-circle, with busts of former Afrikaner leaders. Not all of the pedestals are filled, however. Many of the statues and memorabilia in Orania were donated, meaning the town has only those items which were being removed from display elsewhere. Thus, the pedestals are, from the left hand end: blank, Hans Strijdom, D.F. Malan, H.F. Verwoerd, J.B.M. Hertzog, blank, Paul Kruger. They were all Prime Ministers of the Union of South Africa except Paul Kruger, who was the last President of the Transvaal Republic. Apart from the empty ones, the bronze uniformity is broken by two which are slightly larger and weathered like stone. These two, Kruger and Verwoerd, are also revealed with a light tap to be fibreglass. In other words, the two leaders most revered in the town are commemorated in modern materials rather than bronze or stone. At the centre of this semi-circle is a pedestal with a small bronze figure. It is a small boy, legs at shoulder width, rolling up his sleeve. He is the Klein Reus (small giant), Orania's mascot. Prof Carel saw the figure in an artwork by Elly Holm and thought it was appropriate for Orania. The symbol chosen to represent Afrikaners' future is not a *trekboer* (pioneer farmer) with a wagon and gun, but a small industrious boy.



The monuments on the hill

Orania's flag being hoisted at the town's annual show, the Volkstaat Skou

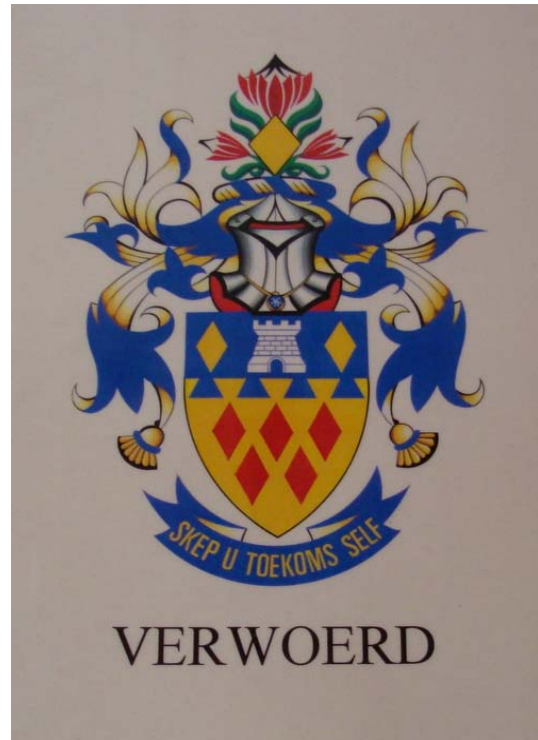
There is another collection of busts and various plaques in Orania's museum. Many of these, the museum's curator Kokkie de Kock explained, had once been in the parliament building in Bloemfontein. Someone had found that they were being thrown out, and had phoned up Orania to ask if they wanted them. The museum's other artifacts, which relate to nineteenth and twentieth century Afrikaner history, as well as various everyday objects and firearms, were donated by residents of the town or beyond. The fact that many such items are not valued by the present governing authorities means that they are often removed.

The town's second museum is the house that Betsie Verwoerd lived in. She was the widow of former Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd, who was assassinated in 1966. Part of the house has been left as she lived in it, and part of it has display cases holding memorabilia relating to her husband. This includes various decorations he received, his briefcase and the shirt that he was wearing when he was killed. There are also family photos of the Verwoerds, of 'Doctor' fishing, and items inherited through Betsie's family. In one of the cases is an outfit: a dress, with a matching jacket, hat, gloves, handbag, and shoes, all in lavender. It was worn by Betsie Verwoerd for an official visit to Buckingham Palace in 1961. Its pride of place is remarkable, given the Verwoerds's reputation for having been staunchly republican.





The outfit that Betsie Verwoerd wore when visiting Buckingham Palace



The Verwoerd family crest with the motto 'Create your future yourself'

On the edge beyond Orania West is a dirt track where, beyond a small structure of concrete bricks are some gravestones. The concrete building is a bunker which dates from the Water Works time, and was used for storing explosives. The ground here has the same sparse rough grass and dry ground. On some of the graves the top surface of the soil dried solid before the earth compacted, the outer crust then collapsing in. Some of the graves have two names on them, one with the date of passing and the other the name of a widow or widower resident in the town. The largest monument is marble of an unusual round and triangular shape, one half the resting place of Betsie Verwoerd and the other half empty, waiting out a dispute on the relocation of Hendrik Verwoerd's remains from Pretoria where he was buried after his assassination but where his legacy is not respected.

### **THE GENEALOGY OF AN IDEA**

Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd is probably the most divisive figure in South African history. His Dutch parents emigrated to South Africa when he was a baby but his foreign origins never prevented him proving himself a loyal Afrikaner. The first

stage of his career was in academia, in sociology and psychology, becoming a professor at Stellenbosch. The fact that some of his studies were in Germany during the 1920s makes it easy to draw a connection between the extreme racial views of that environment with those he later implemented, but it has been argued that his academic work in fact rejected the biological racialism of the time and his political thought was influenced more by the segregation in the United States, where he also visited (Miller 1993). After working as a journalist for a period, Verwoerd turned to politics, taking on the Ministry of Native Affairs in 1950 and becoming Prime Minister in 1958.

Orania is the bearer of Verwoerd's ideology – in its sympathetic interpretation – but in its more practicable small-scale version, and also the bearers of his memory through family accounts. One of his daughters, Anna, married a young minister named Carel Boshoff, meaning that when Prof Carel spoke about Verwoerd it was from his own experience. Prof Carel explained that Verwoerd's ambition was to develop South Africa into a federation of ethnic territories. If South Africa remained a country with one government then a democratic system would be largely dependent on the demographic makeup of the electorate. This was a plan which was bound to last well beyond the sixteen years that Verwoerd was in power, a long-term plan reaching as far as the year 2000 (Hepple 1967:115). Instead of providing Africans with the institutions for their empowerment but without the training to implement them effectively, Verwoerd argued that such preparation was necessary, which would take time. The process of development involves many interlinked aspects of life and all of these aspects had to be coordinated across the whole population. Alexander Hepple, a liberal politician and biographer of Verwoerd, took the view that Verwoerd's racism was the more dangerous for its insidiousness, for being disguised by a cover of welfare (ibid.:114).



An outdated sign on the main road south of Orania



“Self-working” – self-reliant’

Verwoerd is not often viewed sympathetically, but the impressions of him given by Prof Carel, who was his son-in-law, and by Prof Carel’s sister Annatjie Boshoff who was secretary to Betsie Verwoerd, offer a sharp contrast with the popular view. By Prof Carel’s account, Verwoerd intended to create an ethnic area for Afrikaners. The Orange River project sought to assist agriculture in the semi-desert Karoo region and allow the country’s largest river to provide water more regularly. Two dams, the Verwoerd (now Gariep) dam, and the P.K. le Roux (now Vanderkloof) dam were built, in addition to irrigation canals. It was the town built to house workers on one of these irrigation projects which was bought by Avstig. Yet for Verwoerd, as for the founders of Orania, the appeal of this part of the country was its relative emptiness and the fact that it was not a desirable area. This made the availability of Orania for purchase a fortuitous coincidence.

Orania shows continuity with original Verwoerdian ideas not only in where it is located and through the involvement of some of his family members, but in an ideological sense too. The plans for apartheid had been put together by academics and people in think tanks, particularly SABRA (Suid Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse Aangeleenthede, South African Bureau of Racial Affairs), and then implemented by the politicians. But there were, arguably, differences between the iterations of the concept in social scientific terms, the principle in theological terms, the theoretical details, the policy, and the implementation and its effects. It was with the realisation that apartheid had not turned out as they had envisaged and could not be salvaged in its present form that some people were going back to the drawing board. The rejection of a single democratic South Africa in place of a goal of federation, an

attempt at providing self-determination for minorities was a return to Verwoerd's original ideas of how South Africa would develop in the long term. Avstig are using the same idea but implementing it the other way around, starting from the ground up without trying forcing it on anyone.

After a career as a theologian and missionary, during which he was also actively involved in Afrikaner cultural politics, Prof Carel was integral in the establishment of Orania. He was the considerate and engaged grandfather of the town. I was told that from his upbringing on a farm near Nylstroom and his years as a missionary in Soweto, he spoke sePedi about as comfortably as Afrikaans. Prof Carel was diagnosed with cancer several years ago, and passed away in March 2011, four years after his wife Anna. Nevertheless, he still maintained his schedule of feeding and milking cows, seeing all the people who wanted to meet him or ask his advice, being minister at the NGK, and writing an autobiography.

Prof Carel's dictum was that “*n volk leef in sy instellings*” – a people/nation live through their institutions. A nation requires institutions to exist, and those institutions will shape the nation. Nations were created by God and people should not undo them. It is on the grounds of requiring different institutions such as schools in native languages that separate development was pursued, as this occurs more easily and appropriately with territorial separation. Could a nation remain monocultural if it is not also its own territorial entity? It is based on the flawed assumption that a *volk* or ethnically distinct group have their own language, religion, culture, and ideally, territory. At the very least, the collective memory of their fate at the hands of the British army during the Boer War, for them the Second Freedom War, was enough to give the impression that Afrikaners were lucky to have survived and that nobody but themselves would make any effort to ensure that they did survive. The solution to this was an ambitious large-scale concept of territorial consolidation to stave off the threats to Afrikaner survival that could be seen on all fronts: from the British Empire and the rapidly growing African population, and also the disruption that followed decolonisation in nearby countries. This was known as separate development, or alternately Grand apartheid. Local opinions in Orania regard apartheid as a strategy for survival, as well as a means of development for the African groups. Most

discussion of apartheid in Orania refers to grand apartheid rather than petty apartheid, the former being the policy of separate tribal homelands, ultimately for all ethnic groups, and the latter being the segregation of public facilities, from buses to public toilets.

The roots of Orania's establishment lie in this side of the equation. As I was told the story by Lida Strydom, an officer at the Orania Beweging, the idea of creating a *volkstaat* for Afrikaners rather than *volkstate* for other ethnic groups derives from the work of Prof Chris Jooste, another quietly spoken resident of Orania. He is another of the founders, who lives in Orania with his wife Marianne, but avoids the public attention which sought out Prof Carel. From as early as the 1960s he argued that the grand apartheid homelands policy was untenable, and the reverse should be instituted instead (Giliomee places this shift in the mid-1970s (2003a:562)). As head of the influential pro-National Party research organisation, SABRA, Prof Jooste's stance against that of the government resulted in SABRA's funding being withdrawn.

Lida and her husband John came to Orania in 1995. She explained that there was social unrest in Natal at the time, and Orania provided a *tuisgevoel* (feeling of being at home). Orania had the right climate for growing pecans, which appealed to them, and their eldest daughter was at the age to start school. Lida is passionate about Orania and its position in the fight to maintain Afrikaner culture and identity, but she was as passionate, if not more so, when she told me about having home schooled her three children. She has an attractive and engaging demeanour like a news presenter, inviting people to let down their guard, but making it unclear whether she trusts them in return. Lida and John have been working at the Orania Beweging for several years. He is very involved in representing Orania to people from outside, and is one of the main tour guides for the town. John was a medical doctor with an interest in natural medicine, and they previously ran a shop together in the town.

SABRA has since been resurrected by residents of Orania as EPOG, the research institute for Ekonomie, Politiek, Omgewing en Geskiedenis (Economics, Politics, Environment and History). Orania was intended by its founders as a space for cultural growth, but the goal of providing a homeland for Afrikaners has inevitably drawn those with different goals and philosophies, through need or fear.

## JOINING THE VOLKSTAAT

The concept of the *volk* is central to Orania and there are several variants which use the stem *volk*. *Volkseie*, literally ‘people’s own,’ is used to describe an institution or trait which belongs exclusively to a *volk*. For example, *volkseie onderwys* means education which is tailored specifically for Afrikaans children, but *volkseie arbeid* means using Afrikaans-only labour. In describing something exclusively tailoring to Afrikaans people, *volkseie* can also euphemistically mean excluding people who are not white, or not Afrikaans. That is, it describes a niche for Afrikaners but similar outsiders can be included at people’s discretion. *Volksvreemdes* literally means strangers to the *volk*, referring collectively to people who are not Afrikaans, external to the *volk*, but again, although it is usually a descriptor, can be used to discriminate against non-white people. The latter two terms can sometimes be positive descriptors and sometimes negative, partly because the line between Afrikaans people and those who can be accepted as assimilable into an Afrikaans cultural circle is variable and context-dependent. Yet in some contexts, *volk* can also refer to the general public, so it is not always an ideologically loaded term.

*Volkseie arbeid* is a concept particular to Orania, due to their wish to be *selfstandig*, self-reliant or self-sustaining. In line with the point of hiring only Afrikaners, or in practice only white labourers, *selfwerksaamheid*, which does not translate, implies doing your own work as an individual. This means being independent and self-reliant, lessening the tasks for which it is considered necessary to employ other people, and can also involve mechanising. Although it is a practical aspect of living in an isolated area, Orania’s goal of being self-sustaining involves encouraging people to be independent by doing their own domestic work. Whilst this may seem a small matter, having domestic workers is a ubiquitous part of life in South Africa for any who can afford it.

There are several Afrikaans terms which are frequently used in discussion of ethnic groups in Orania. Afrikaners are those of Dutch, German and French Huguenot extraction, or those who have been assimilated into that group. Whilst they share the Afrikaans language with many coloured and black South Africans, they are ethnically distinct from them, having white or pale skin. Sometimes *boer* is

synonymous with Afrikaner, although it invokes a traditional image which is associated with rural values and habits. *'n Regte boer/boeremeisie* (a real boer/boer girl) is a positive description, implying industriousness, reliability and piety. It is with this traditionalism in mind that some people use Boer as a political designation which excludes any Afrikaners with reformist, liberal or multicultural inclinations. The people who use this term invariably include themselves in this group a subset of Afrikaners, and are staunchly right wing.

In order to establish themselves in Orania, prospective or new residents must undergo an interview, known as *keuring* (vetting/approval), and orientation procedure. Applicants must explain why they wish to move to Orania, how they intend to support themselves and their dependents, if they have a criminal record or child custody disputes, etc. Much of the information which must be provided by applicants appears to be to ensure that Orania can cater for its residents, including profession and interests, and medical, psychological, military history, and whether they were victims of any robberies or attacks. Applicants must also subscribe to Orania's ideal and practical tenets: the goal of creating an independent state for Afrikaners, living by Christian principles, and not employing non-Afrikaans labourers. They are, however, bound to being polite to non-Afrikaans guests to the town and maintaining Orania's good relationship with South African laws and society. Additionally, they are notified of the public holidays observed in Orania and the expectation to partake in community life. Procedures for dispute resolution are also laid out. If prospective or new residents are not approved, they can be given very short notice to leave.

Because the town and its economy is so small, there is only a limited market for people to be employed in certain professions, so businesspeople often have clients or customers outside the town. Orania has a moderate amount of business, these days mostly relating to the building boom, including two hardware stores, two real estate agents and several builders. There are two local jewellers, an artist, many hairdressers and other home craft industries, including baking. The largest industries are tourism, centring around the Oewerpark and many Bed and Breakfasts; and farming, largely of pecans, enabled by irrigation pipelines from the Orange River. Other people such as the many retirees have external forms of income.

There are no accurate figures of the population, since in the early years non-resident supporters of the Orania Beweging were counted to ambitiously raise the figures. In the present time people come and go so frequently that it is difficult to count the permanent population, but was in the vicinity of 800 by 2011, with the figure given as 1000 by 2013. However, in mid-2010, an officer at the town council counted the population as 657, whereas one of the estate agents provided the figure of a little over 800.

### **A SOCIAL TAXONOMY OF ORANIA**

The residents of Orania vary in their views and inclinations along several axes. These include ideology, ethnocentrism, religious conservatism or pragmatism, social liberalism or conservatism, education and class or economic status, and party politics.

There are some who were motivated to move to Orania to be involved with the creation of the *volkstaat*, who believe that the town is a step towards autonomy for Afrikaners. Others are more reactionary in their motivations, moving to Orania for its apparently idyllic environment, in protest against the high crime and corruption of South Africa, or simply because there are no black residents in the town. There are always a variety of factors involved in migrations and the same applies in relation to moving to Orania, with some factors being in favour of Orania and others being against other parts of South Africa. Some of the early settlers in Orania were afraid of a civil war, but after it did not eventuate most of these left.

Of the roughly 800 people in Orania, most originated more from the northern parts of South African than the southern. Many have come from Pretoria, smaller numbers from other urban areas such as Bloemfontein, and others from smaller towns and farms in the Free State and former Transvaal. Many affiliate themselves with the Transvaal Republic (ZAR) and Orange Free State (OVS) – nation-states which have not existed for a century – but can not necessarily trace descent from those time periods. Of those few who came from the Western Cape, they were unlikely to have come from Cape Town, which is seen as very cosmopolitan. Several also originate from KwaZulu Natal. People do not often move from other parts of the Northern Cape – as much as Orania is unique, it is also quite characteristic of towns



in the region. It may also be significant that the province is predominantly Afrikaans-speaking.

Historically there has been a political difference between Afrikaners in the north and south of the country (Giliomee 2003b). Although this may be more of a historical curiosity, it does correlate with the previous residences of people who are now in Orania. Perhaps more substantially, inferences could be made about the social divisions in those regions and the proportions of people from there: social composition and dynamics vary in different parts of South Africa but black/white or Afrikaans/African divisions tend to be more pronounced in the north. It is possible to suggest from where people came from, that the appeal of Orania as a place to live is in relation to circumstances elsewhere.

People cite social tensions, lack of mutual understanding and common public languages, and frictions such as crime (or perceptions thereof) as a reason for moving to Orania. A term frequently used is that people were *gatvol* (fed up, pissed off) with the situation outside Orania, in particular the crime, the dysfunctional public services, and the incompetent government prioritising anything over those matters that concern Afrikaners. Some people move to Orania because they have been victims of crime and value its safe environment, others out of fear of violence. Yet many conflate the safety of the town with its monoethnicity, seeing it as safe because of the lack of black people.

Those who are dedicated to the creation of an Afrikaner *volkstaat*, or in the short term some kind of self-determination for Afrikaners, form the ideological core of the town. Some have become residents only recently, after supporting the *volkstaat* movement, others were among the founders and first residents of Orania.

I will attempt to characterise the two points around which ideological discussion in Orania centres, on the basis that this is a distinction made within Orania, much as they do not represent two distinct groups. The cross-cutting affiliations cannot be accurately mapped out since they reflect the particularities of individuals, but some general clusters do exist. Later on in this thesis, I argue that there is a division through the town which roughly aligns with the two schools which exist at present. There were at previous stages two other schools but it was a long time before this was even mentioned to me, and I was unable to find out very much

about them, except to infer that they were short-lived. There are other people who home-school their children and those whose children attend boarding school in Bloemfontein or elsewhere. Unless they were public figures it was more difficult to know what their politics were without the political affiliation that schools represent.

If you were to engage someone in the town in conversation about Orania politics, you would likely hear the term ‘the Boshoffs’. The Boshoffs are not a self-declared grouping, but named as an example by people who disagree with them. Those who oppose them are not a defined grouping, but I shall refer to them as conservatives in the discussion which follows.

### THE BOSHOFFS

The central figure in the town was Carel Boshoff, a retired professor of theology, former missionary and socio-political activist. ‘The Boshoffs’ relates to the family of Prof Carel. Two of his sons live in the town: Carel iv<sup>1</sup> – elected as mayor in mid-2010, and Wynand – variously school principal and teacher, historian and PhD student. Whilst their perspectives often differ from each other, they derive from an academic approach to the understanding of society and an analysis of the shortcomings but also the achievements of the twentieth century Afrikaner.

Carel Boshoff iv, a son of Prof Carel, studied philosophy and has also been involved in Afrikaner politics, including as a member of the Northern Cape provincial parliament. During his recent term as mayor, he helped promote the liberal and ideological aspect of the town. A contemplative man, Carel appears to have thought through every aspect of Orania’s ideology and practical aspects, and is keen to debate them. He hosts a radio program called Blik na Buite (glance/view towards the outside) – together with Sebastiaan Biehl, a German convert to Afrikanerdom, discussing current affairs. His wife Anje is a literature graduate who then pursued a career as a jeweller, and has since trained several of Orania’s jewellers. During 2009-10 she was a teacher at the Volksskool, where their four children attend school.

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<sup>1</sup> Carel iv, or Carel *vier* (four). He is the fourth Carel Boshoff in consecutive generations. Due to family naming, his brothers’ and his own eldest sons are also called Carel Boshoff, and his sisters’ second sons are also named Carel. He is, however, not the eldest son.

Carel's younger brother Wynand was doing a PhD in education at the time of fieldwork as well as teaching at the Volksskool. He is respected in the town as a historian even by people who disagree with him politically – even though political difference implies a different view of history. Wynand's wife Esme is a hairdresser, and they try to ensure their children have ordinary relationships with people outside of Orania so as not to be afraid of difference.

On the basis of their father's vision, the two brothers and those whom they associate with or agree with about the future or intention of Orania take the view that people are all equal, but that they belong to different cultures. In the particular circumstances of South Africa this means the only way to ensure their cultural persistence is by creating a place where those culturally specific institutions can exist. They believe Orania can create the space for Afrikaans people to be themselves, a place where they can embrace the language and culture and religion which is a part of themselves. This must be done through making the best of the past without denying its significant mistakes, and using it to build an identity to take them through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are active in promoting tolerance within the town and in its relationship to the outside world. For them it is important to form alliances, particularly with coloured groups with similar interests to Orania.

Wynand said that 'most people unfortunately don't see Orania as an attempt at self-determination, a *volkstaat*, they only see that there are no black people. It is meant to be ideologically driven but unfortunately many people come for the wrong reasons, and until the racism is overcome it will not be bigger than a village'. Wynand had been very negative about the present and future of Orania compared with its intention. He was embarrassed that so many people in Orania are against anything to do with non-whites, on the basis of prejudice rather than for any other reasons. His brother's election as mayor, however, buoyed in him the feeling that at least their views had enough support for his brother to be elected. This would also mean he need no longer be ashamed of the way Orania was presented to the outside by the mayor. Yet another view was that the previous mayor, Martin Kemp, had been the only one who was not in the pockets of the Boshoffs. The Boshoffs wanting to do things their way and having their fingers in all the pies is undemocratic; the town does not exclusively belong to them.

Although he lives and works in Gauteng, Jaco Mulder has a strong connection to Orania. He has several businesses in the town and comes with his wife Lynette and two teenage sons for holidays. His regular visits and keen interest in what happens in the town make him a part of the community in its social and political senses. Having recently stepped down from the position of leader of the Freedom Front Plus (Vryheids Front Plus, VF+) in Gauteng, he has a broad and more factually-based perspective on the state of South Africa, which is an asset to the community. One of Jaco's hobbies is making wine from grapes grown in the deserts of the Northern Cape in response to those who consider the Western Cape the only place that can produce a decent drop (the labels on the bottles suggest: 'serve in good company').

Ludwig Everson and his wife Retha could also be considered part of the socially liberal part of Orania. They are originally from KwaZulu-Natal and came to Orania after living in the Netherlands for nine years. Besides the cultural environment, one of their reasons for choosing Orania was their interest in building an earthship (*aardskip*), an entirely self-sustaining house, which they commenced in 2011. The town's newness and lack of bureaucracy means that it can be open to such ventures. Ludwig is an engineer and he teaches science at the Volksskool.

Although there are different views among this group, it nonetheless seems easier to characterise the Boshoffs than the conservatives, partly because the latter do not coalesce around a particular ideal but can include two types of conservatism. While there may be no clear distinction made between the two, the ethnocentric right wing has a different type of social philosophy from neo-liberal conservatism.

### THE CONSERVATIVES

There is not a collective name for those who are opposed to the Boshoffs, but there are certainly groups and individuals who oppose their relative liberalism and look more towards tradition as an example for the future. The patterns from the past have allowed Afrikaners to persist through centuries of opposition and conflict, against all odds. South Africa's history is exceptional and it is that which shaped the character of Afrikaners; they are unique and will defend themselves with whatever means they must.

The conservatives are not the only ones who have no faith at all in the present political regime, but they are more likely to oppose discussion with the government: compromise on their part will not lead to compromise from those now in power, it will instead lead to the dissolution of the Afrikaner identity. They fear the greater South Africa and the people within it because of the high rate of crime and corruption which impacts on people's everyday lives. Some among this group are not interested in whether Orania is to become a *volkstaat*, but prefer to live in an environment where they feel physically and cosmologically safe, being amongst their own kind in a country where it is sometimes difficult to understand the other groups and easy to perceive them as hostile. People frequently stressed that they could feel at ease amongst their own kind. Among these are Dawie and Celeste van Niekerk, who moved from Pretoria with their three young daughters in 2008. Dawie works in IT so is able to work remotely. Having grown up on a farm in the Free State, Celeste worked in the Netherlands as an au pair when she was younger and has trained as a teacher, but has been making home furnishings since living in Orania. She also has a radio program, Vonkelvrou (Sparkling Woman), which involves discussion of women's issues, although it is decidedly not feminist in nature. Celeste has a collection of hats.

Many people frequently justified their fear for the future of South Africa under the leadership of Africans by reference to other African countries. 'Just look at Zimbabwe!' There is no functional African country, they claimed, and all the evidence pointed to South Africa suffering the same fate. The implication was that it is impossible to rely on anyone but your own kind or even to trust in their good faith. There was no sense in staying in that kind of environment where your culture and ability is continually undermined, they had had enough.

Although this group positions itself against the Boshoffs, it includes the younger brother of Prof Carel, Dominee Adam, or at least they respect him, however he might position himself. It may be impolitic for many people to place themselves on either side, but they often have opinions which tend more to one side than the other. Dominee Adam is the minister of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (Afrikaans Protestant Church, APK). His wife, Tannie Adelaide, studied music and plays the organ in the church, and is a regular presence on Orania's radio station. Dominee

Adam followed his brother into missionary work in Soweto with the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, NGK). The APK itself broke away from the NGK in the mid-1980s in response to the latter's rejection of apartheid and move towards racially integrated churches, Dominee Adam being one of the founders. Both Carel and Adam Boshoff had been NGK ministers and missionaries, and this split between the churches – the *verligte* (enlightened) and *verkrampste* (reactionary) directions, if you will – roughly aligns with the division in Orania between Boshoff and Conservative, and also reflects the political views of each group.

A farm manager and minister at the Gereformeerde Kerk Dordt congregation, Koos Kirsten studied theology at Potchefstroom, a pursuit which takes seven years. He is very involved with the CVO School, teaching theology, where his wife Rika is the deputy principal. He explained to me that one of the motivations for moving to Orania was the pursuit of a school with a high standard of curriculum. Koos is simultaneously central to the traditionalist part of the town whilst also having a renegade academic outlook on the town.

#### CROSS-CUTTING AFFILIATIONS

Much as there is a tension in the town between progressive and conservative attitudes, the division is not neat, and most people will sit across this divide in some respects. Generally speaking, those who are more ideologically driven affiliate with the Volksskool, the NGK, the Oranjerivier congregation of the Gereformeerde Kerk (GK), and the Freedom Front (VF+). Those who attend the more conservative congregations such as the APK the GK Dordt congregation or the Israelite churches often send their children to the CVO, which belongs to a network of CVO schools which have their own Afrikaner-centric curriculum and own sport tournaments. Being educated or professional as opposed to having practical jobs is not a defining characteristic of either ideological positioning in the town. The members of other church congregations and social affiliations do not necessarily fall into one group or the other either. If church congregations tend towards one grouping, this can be due to theological leanings or due to the personal inclinations of the minister or congregation members.

For example, Roelien is one of the town's jewellers, of which there are at present two. She is married to Frans de Klerk, who was head of the Orania Beweging until September 2010 and was then shifted to coordinate the different branches of the town council. They attend the GK Oranjerivier, their children attend the CVO, and they live in Kleingeluk. The fact that Roelien's children are educated at the CVO does not mean they are not among the more socially liberal of Orania's inhabitants. Another person who is committed to the building of a *volkstaat* but who attends the APK is Manie Opperman. A retired archaeology professor, he can be found cycling around the town, and working at the archives. He is involved in research in and about the town through the research institution EPOG. He also occasionally leads tours to show the rock carvings on the town's land, which include bushman rock carvings and land purchase contracts. Based on his experience in the military, he is in charge of security in Orania.

Annabe came to Orania with her parents and three brothers at Orania's establishment. Her mother is the eldest daughter of Prof Carel, so she has lots of family involved with the town. When her parents moved to New Zealand she and two brothers went also: she had been going to go away to university anyway, so going to university in Auckland seemed like an even more interesting experience. She met her husband, Ebert Terblanche when returning to visit her family. He came to Orania of his own accord in his mid-20s after working at a financial auditing corporation. Before they moved to Australia in 2011, Ebert was part of the ideological and organisational part of the town, but they attended the APK.

Karin and André Coetsee are part of a large family group who sit mostly but not exclusively on the conservative side of the community. They operate the Oewerpark complex, including the spa and hotel. Her parents came to Orania after they sold their farm near Bloemfontein where Karin and her four sisters grew up. All the daughters and their families have since followed. André was in the air force and farmed with his brothers in law before they all eventually moved to Orania. The extended family make up part of the Gemeente van die Verbondsvolk (Congregation of the People of the Covenant) congregation in the town, although Karin's mother, Ouma Rienie, attends the Gereformeerde Kerk Oranjerivier as that is the church she has attended during her married life. André is widely respected in the community for

being a hard worker, whose labours have produced the impressive and successful Oewerpark development, and a problem-solver. Karin studied archaeology and *volkekunde* (the Afrikaans tradition of anthropology), and has a keen interest and insight into the different perspectives the world has to offer. She and André have five children, three of whom lived in Orania during 2009-11. All attended the Volksskool because they thought it encouraged independent thought and individuality.

Tanja, Karin and André's daughter, was interested in art at school, but had primarily looked forward to getting married and starting a family. She married young and lived in Kimberley for a while, but returned to Orania alone. She is now married to Johan, the owner of one of the town's two hardware stores, and they live in an apartment adjoining the premises so that she and her sons can see him throughout the day. This also makes Orania Hardware a centre of social activity, and the place where I spent many hours and days of my fieldwork. Tanja says that Orania is her home and she could never live anywhere else. Johan came to Orania in 1993 with his family. He said that even back then the crime was high in Pretoria, and he did not want to live like that. Although he is socially conservative, Johan is one of not many people in Orania who has ordinary everyday interactions with non-white people through his work.

Thus, whilst discussions in and about the town tend to group into two, those who favour engagement with the world outside Orania, and those who prefer interactions to be with like-minded people, there are different ways in which people interpret their theology, politics, and their own and others' experiences. This is partly reflected in political allegiances. Most people are supporters of the VF+. Those who are more politically engaged are often affiliated with the VF+ and the former National Party, by which I mean the *verligte* (enlightened) part of the NP in its later years which promoted reform. This might not sound very liberal but it means they are largely supportive of moderately right wing political measures, which distinguishes them from the AWB and others. In the context of Orania it seemed that although the VF+ is certainly partisan and focuses on ethnic particularity, it is not necessarily extreme. Jaco Mulder, who was the leader of the VF+ in Gauteng at the time, said that even if politicians and leaders talk about radical change, once they actually have some influence they are usually more moderate. A few people in town



were supporters of the AWB but they were considered outliers, even though there was a surge of sympathetic support when the AWB's leader Eugene Terre'Blanche was killed in 2010. Most election results demonstrate overwhelming support for the VF+ in Orania, with several Democratic Alliance voters but also a few for the ANC. The Economic Freedom Fighters, founded by Julius Malema, famously polled four votes in the 2014 national elections.

In addition to these axes of debate, Orania has geographic sub-sections. Partly through its geographic separation, Kleingeluk forms a social grouping, within which is the worker's compound Elim. At the Oewerpark, some of the houses are permanent homes. The Coetsee's house is the centre of activity, and Ouma Rienie lives in one of the smaller houses, as do André's sister Nettie and her daughter. A few others are occupied, and the remaining ones are often owned by *uitwoners* who are part of the community when they visit during the holidays.

Families who live on surrounding farms are also part of the community, even if they are not officially part of the town. Dissie Kruger has been farming by the Orange River since before Orania was established, running the farm that he runs with his wife Esmien and son Derius. Esmien is also a music teacher and plays the organ (in this case an electronic keyboard) at the GK Oranjerivier which they attend. Similarly, Pierre and Ursula farm on the opposite side of the river from Orania. Since the tragic death of one of their daughters, they have built a charismatic church in Petrusville, a hostel facility and bus service for the elderly, and countless other such acts of charity.

Groups can correlate along lines of kinship and acquaintance through church group or work or where they live, though since the town is small none of these are necessary factors and all correlations are rough. Different groupings bring people together although they may belong for different reasons. The town divides roughly along this difference between the ideological core and the conservative part. I will argue that these groups represent different relationships between Orania and the rest of South Africa, between Afrikaners and the different kinds of people who are not Afrikaners. Suffice to say, there is a spectrum of approaches to the construction of the project that is Orania. The town has a schism running through it.

## **LIFE IN THE VOLKSTAAT**

Life in Orania is not easy for most people in the sense of economically prosperous or with lots of leisure time, but it is easygoing compared to the city lifestyle that most are used to. But the appeal is perhaps something a little more intangible. People move there because it is so recognisable: they feel *tuis* (at home). The signs at the entrances to the town declaring Orania to be an *Afrikanertuiste* (Afrikaner home) reference this. Something about life in Orania is of sentimental value. Whether it is familiar to adults by reminding them of the way things were when life did not present so many obstacles, or nostalgic in the sense of reminding people how things should be now, even if it never existed in the past and may not exist more than superficially in present-day Orania either.

Although some have been residents for twenty years, since the town was a dilapidated collection of fibre cement sheeting houses, and others are arriving all the time, all are considered Oraniërs, and consider themselves so. Some people stay for only a few months, some for only two years, but most who stay beyond that point stay permanently. Thus, Orania has a high proportion of people who only live there for a short while because they do not succeed economically or are unwilling to live without a domestic worker, and others who have been there since it was a ghost town with peeling paint on curling fibre cement sheeting. Who can come and who is able to stay is largely dependent on their means of financial support.

The population currently increases primarily through immigration, when people decide as individuals or a family to move there. The dominant groups are young families, single men and retirees. It is considered an ideal place to retire because it is safe, and although the nearest hospitals are some distance, there are medical facilities in the town. There are lots of families with school-age children, because Orania is a safe and happy place to grow up.

Once they have finished school, teenagers are faced with the question of whether to stay in town or to leave. Depending on their chosen career paths and skills, Orania may offer very few or very good vocational opportunities. Those wishing to pursue further study attend tertiary institutions in Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom or Pretoria, or else do a distance learning degree through Unisa (the University of South Africa). This means that many of those who grow up in Orania

do not live in the town during their twenties, and it is as yet unclear whether they will want to or be able to come back when they have children themselves. It is indeed a central question in relation to the future of Orania. It remains to be seen whether Orania can find a means for retaining the children who grow up there rather than relying mainly on immigration. This will largely depend on the types of economic growth in the future. The town celebrated its twentieth anniversary in April 2011 so it is too early to determine how it will progress, but dramatic political and social circumstances have influenced the fluctuations of its fortune so there are many external factors which will come into account.

Furthermore, for those who were born in Orania or spent the substantial part of their upbringing there, whether they stay or return may depend on how they are brought up – their world view – and this is one of the main facets of the conflict over how to educate children in Orania. One tertiary student said that some of those who leave Orania to study find that they cannot cope with the general challenges of South African society, but others find that it is not nearly as dispiriting as they have been taught, and become disillusioned with their upbringing in Orania.

Due to the labour program, Elim, there are many single men, aged from late teens upwards. Elim provides accommodation and helps find employment, and therefore is a route by which a lot of people come to Orania. Some settle in the town and some stay in Elim for many years, but most leave after a stay ranging from several months to a few years. The employment arranged through Elim is mostly low-skilled (or unskilled), such as building and gardening, and the workers are not very well equipped to compete in the labour market in South Africa. Elim is simultaneously at Orania's centre and periphery, both philosophically its heart and the route by which the corrupted outside reaches into the town. When other people talk about Elim, they might be invoking either the image of the hardworking spirit of the town, or the other stereotype of unsettled unreliable people with dubious backgrounds.

Elim is situated in Kleingeluk. The area of Kleingeluk, which is the former living quarters for the black service workers, is a community within the community. By virtue of smaller plots people are in closer proximity to their neighbours, but the generally lower socio-economic level means there can be more need for social

support among neighbours. Whilst it is easy to think of it as Orania's white township, as some of its residents do, it provides an illustration of the complexity underneath this simple image. The houses and plots of land in Kleingeluk are smaller and cheaper than in the main part of town, and some residents are labourers or domestic workers. However, Kleingeluk is also home to some professionals and people who prefer smaller houses for reasons other than affordability, so the delineation has a social meaning that is not entirely accurate. Residents include young couples and families, people who find it easier to maintain smaller houses – whether due to having no domestic workers, or because of their age – but also some of the town's administrators.



Harvesting pecans: the tractor shakes the tree so that the husks fall off onto a mat, from which they are collected.



The first of Orania's straw bale houses, situated in Kleingeluk

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The absence of black workers in Orania sets it in contrast to the rest of South Africa, but Orania sets itself apart in other ways. Driving through the town there are several houses made of straw bales clad with concrete. Some houses have solar panels or wind turbines for generating electricity, and all newly built houses must have solar hot water tanks installed. An earth-ship house was started in 2011, and will be entirely independent of utilities and services. The town's waste is separated into five different bins and collected for recycling – also remarkable in South Africa. Whilst many of the original houses are made of fibre cement sheeting in various states of peeling, and others are poorly insulated against the desert's summer sun and icy

winter, the ethic among some of the town's inhabitants leans towards permaculture and sustainability. I asked the architect, Christiaan van Zyl, who introduced straw bale houses to the town, whether efficient housing and renewable energy were meant to signify independence from national utility services, but he said that he simply found them fascinating, having researched them at university. The fact that there happened to be others in Orania who were interested in sustainability helped to create a conducive environment for pursuing these interests.

#### COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Orania has its own radio station, on air 5-10pm every day, and re-broadcast the next morning. It can only be received within a few kilometres of the town, and its ultra-parochial nature is reflected in some of the program content. The 'noticeboard' (*kennisgewingbord*) can include such information as parcels that have not been collected from the post office and lost hubcaps, as well as any local events. The other programs cover such varied topics as new music, cooking, quizzes, literature, history, politics and current affairs, and business. Both presenters and interviewees share their stories and knowledge on the radio. Each of the two schools also has a weekly slot. In the evenings the streets may be quiet but people are still engaging with others in the community from within their houses.

This sense of Orania being a community built through personal connections and knowledge also exists in everyday interactions. People always greet each other while driving, requiring anthropologists and new inhabitants to learn the skill of indicating, turning a corner, changing gears and waving at the same time – the use of indicators says 'no, after you!' Recognising people by their cars is one of the ways that people's activities are visible to each other.

People take interest in each other's business, but the line between being concerned for others and relishing others' affairs is frequently crossed. In times of need the town can work together, but daily life does not normally require this and most people prefer to stay informed about what other townsfolk are, and are frequently not, doing. This means that some of the things reported here are not necessarily factually accurate, but in any case the information circulated is socially relevant. In these matters, being aware of what is happening in the town does not rely

on public networks, but private circles of information. The stillness of the town's surface belies both the socially relevant information that is circulated and also the negotiation of Orania's principles and future direction, as can be contained within people's perceptions of and animosities towards other characters in the town. Much of this discussion occurs behind closed doors, and operates through friendship networks. Although Orania is effectively premised on like-minded people coming together, frequently friendships are pursued despite radical differences on fundamental matters, leaving some topics taboo after initial discussion. For all the appearance of a politics of exclusion, Orania abounds with compromise. Many people claimed to not have truly close friends in the town, with their closest friends living elsewhere in the country. This is perhaps one of the reasons why family, particular nuclear family, takes a central place.

One rule of settlement in Orania which overlapped with the quasi-moral preoccupations of many of the more socially conservative residents was prohibition of co-habitation. This was meant to deter and to indicate disapproval of pre-marital sex. It was said that men and women who were not either related or married could not live together. Some people complained that this rule was unfair as there was a gay couple in the town who were able to circumvent it. Although the community could not be described as being supportive of homosexuality, this is not to say that gay people do not live there or get on perfectly fine. It is also not uncommon for those with bluntly racist views to get along perfectly amicably with black or coloured people. Whilst these ideals and practices may appear to be contradictory, it shows that even general beliefs may be implemented in a more nuanced way. Different reasons for people's behaviour may prevail within circumstances, such as the necessity of being polite to a guest, or maintaining a friendship without expecting to share fundamental views.

Church attendance also has a strong family element to it, due to its role in bringing up children and the view that family is integral in religious and social matters. Contrary to the general view that people belong to a single church for their whole lifetime, with the exception of women moving to their husband's church upon marriage, the number of churches in Orania belies such continuity, and it is doubtful whether this is any more true among Afrikaners in general. Whilst the open practice

of Christianity is something to which all Oraniërs adhere, the forms which this takes are varied. Public meetings are opened with a prayer, usually by the highest-ranking male, and with a bible reading for more formal occasions. Beyond that, most people are churchgoers, but not all, and congregations take different forms, with some a few times a week, some weekly, some at irregular intervals when a minister from outside visits, and others conduct family worship at home. Whilst all adhere to the bible – almost universally the first 1933 translation into Afrikaans, but with occasional debates about the inclusion of the apocrypha or the exclusion of St Paul – there are many interpretations, differences of focus, and degrees of literalism. The fact that effectively all are Protestant Christian obscures significant differences in outlook. Some differences are academic or practical, others deal with destiny, determination, or equality, and all represent potential lines of dissent when applied to Orania, its future, and its relationship with other groups of people.

There are similar differences in the interpretation of history, the view of South Africa's past and Afrikaners' role in it, although for the most part Oraniërs are in agreement in their celebration of events which are significant in Afrikaner history. Most of the public holidays involve an organised event or activity and a talk or discussion on the topic. Some are attended by most of the town but still never everybody. At some the same groups of people are in attendance, who are also those present at public meetings. The CVO School sometimes holds its own events on these holidays for students and their families, meaning they run in competition with the festivities organised through the Orania Beweging.

Such cultural events are common, but there are other events which also involve the sharing of knowledge. The Science and Arts Festival (Wetenskap en Kunstefees), the December holiday program, and even the annual agricultural show (*skou*) and the Vrouens Landbou Vereeniging (VLV, Women's Agricultural Union, equivalent to the Women's Institute) involve Orania's residents sharing their sometimes vast and sometimes very niche skills. Perhaps because it is a town that people live in for specific reasons, the residents have different backgrounds and interesting life experiences. Regular recreational activities include chess, yoga, badminton, martial arts, gym, rugby, motorbiking, car racing, fishing, and river activities. Most recreational time is spent socialising at home or at the Oewerpark or

the town's bar. Plays and concerts have the air of concerts in a small rural town, where the emphasis is more on the experience and people coming together, rather than a professional performance. Some people are very talented but nonetheless the focus is on participation and learning new skills.

Carel iv said that these activities and this level of engagement was what made Orania different from other small towns. It has a public sphere, a depth of interconnection between people that makes Orania a place where people can find belonging. Manie Opperman explained that even if most townspeople do not attend the various meetings and commemorations in the town, they still expect these institutions to exist, as this is part of the character of Orania. Christiaan van der Merwe lives in Pretoria but previously lived in Orania and remains involved, being a familiar face in the town's theatrical productions. After a long discussion at the pub, with several opinions on politics and society flying back and forth, he said that this is what he loves about Orania. Talking about big ideas and things that really matter rather than just complaining; being able to enact change. Christiaan also said that once when he was feeling somewhat depressed, he was walking through Orania and realised that if he knocked on any of the doors in the street where he was to ask for help, help would be given with no reservations.

Despite the many and varied skills of the town's inhabitants, due to various limitations of geography, money and certain skills, Oraniërs are very resourceful. The outcome of various enterprises may end up being unprofessional, but it is this gap which provides the opportunity for someone to gain skills. In some respects opportunities are limited, in other respects there are fewer boundaries, making access easier and enabling opportunities. The geographic environment has more direct implications, which means there is a need for interdependence: without a good job people cannot afford a car so they are dependent on others even to leave the town. Some things are only available in Kimberley or Bloemfontein or Pretoria, thus only to those who have the means. Even if people are asked to leave, the closest bus to anywhere is 40km away in Hopetown.

My favourite joke was one of Daniël Coetsee's, when he would ask on a Friday or Saturday night, "So, should we go to the movies or to KFC?" Because of course, the nearest of either of those was in Kimberley, 120km away. There were two



places to go in the evenings, one being the restaurant at the Oewerpark, which had a bar and later a large television so that people could gather to watch rugby matches, or the bar in town. The bar was located in the central shopping area with a pool table and seating on the concrete patio outside, and bathrooms with no lighting.

A few people in Orania told me a story which they thought chimed with Orania. A guy is sitting on the fence by the main entry point into Orania, and some people pull up in a car and ask what this town is like, they have heard it is awful, and the man says, yes, it is like that. He is sitting on the fence when some other people arrive and say they have heard that in this town people are happy – is it really like that? The man says yes, it is like that.

### III: PHILOSOPHY AND PRAGMATICS – THE ECONOMY AND LABOUR PRACTICES

Of the various souvenirs I brought when I returned to Pretoria after six months in Orania, it was a shiny slip of paper that fascinated my Afrikaans tutor Shaun the most. As members of the household arrived home he jumped up excitedly to show it to them. ‘It’s Orania money! They have their own currency!’ For many people, Orania’s exoticism and radically independent attitude is confirmed by the discovery that they have their own money, the *ora*. They are printed on coated paper which does not tear, and feature pictures relating to Afrikaner heritage but also a children’s cartoon character. Each one is hand signed on the reverse and features a small space for an advertisement. However, as we shall see, the *ora* is as much practical as symbolic, being part of the town’s economic development model.

#### **VOLKSEIE ARBEID – PEOPLE’S OWN LABOUR**

On the rise above the town stands a semi-circle of pedestals, some with busts inherited from other places which were getting rid of them, some of them still empty. This crescent of serene figures surrounds a small bronze boy standing with feet apart, rolling up his sleeve in readiness for work. Orania’s mascot, the *Klein Reus* (little giant) stands at the centre of a collection of inherited historical figures: a boy who works hard. The plaque on the pedestal he stands on reads:

##### **LABORE AD LIBERTATUM**

##### **DEUR ARBEID TOT VRYHEID**

*Volkseie arbeid is die voorvereiste vir volhoubare vryheid in ‘n eie grondgebied. Volksgenote moet verantwoordelikheid neem vir alle soorte werk, soos dit die geval oor die wêreld heen is. Hierdie uitgangspunt is so grondliggend dat dit die waarborg skep vir alle ander vryheidsvoorwaardes. Geen grondgebied vir Afrikaners kan tot vryheid groei terwyl dit van nie-Afrikanerarbeid afhanklik is nie. Wanneer arbeidskrisisse ontstaan in die*

##### **THROUGH WORK TO FREEDOM**

Own labour is the precondition for sustainable freedom in an own territory. Volk members must take responsibility for all types of work, as is the case all over the world. This point is so fundamental that it serves as the guarantee for all privileges of freedom. No territory for Afrikaners can grow towards freedom while it is dependent upon non-Afrikaner labour.

Whenever labour crises occur in the

*toepassing van die beginsel van volkseie arbeid, sal mede-Afrikaners mekaar bystaan om sulke krisisse te oorkom en onder geen omstandighede terugval op die vryheidsvernietigende praktyke van vreemde arbeid nie.*

*LIBERTAS: BURGERLIKE VRYHEID,  
ONAFHANKLIKHEID, GEESTELIKE VRYHEID.  
LABOR: INSPANNING, MOEITE, ARBEID,  
WERKSAAMHEID, WERKLUS*

application of the principle of people's own labour, fellow Afrikaners must stand by each other to overcome such crises and under no circumstances revert to the freedom-inhibiting practices of outside labour.

LIBERTAS: CIVIL FREEDOM,  
INDEPENDENCE, SPIRITUAL FREEDOM  
LABOR: EXERTION, EFFORT/TROUBLE,  
LABOUR, INDUSTRIOUSNESS, DESIRE TO  
WORK



Orania's policy on labour is the cornerstone of the application of the ideology which Orania represents, that of striving towards an Afrikaner territory to ensure self-determination. *Selfwerksaamheid* means that where possible, people should do their own tasks rather than finding another person to do menial work for them. The concept of *volkseie arbeid*, or people's own labour, means Orania only employs Afrikaners as labourers. This way, a coincidence between privilege and colour cannot occur. Moreover, while the apartheid system made use of black people's labour while denying them the vote, so as not to allow their votes to decide the fortunes of Afrikaners, the choice now is between the so-called dictatorship of the

majority, or limiting the economic market to coincide with those who share the same political ideals or skin colour. When other people are employed, they must be Afrikaans. The argument in Orania is that this is necessary to achieve their aim of independence: since people cannot be denied a vote where they live and work, Afrikaners must wean themselves off cheap black labour in order to remain in the majority in their chosen territory.

During a conversation while he was mowing the grass around the house I lived in, Dawid van der Merwe theorised to me that over the years when white people had others to attend to them, white people un-learned how to do simple tasks from having others to do them instead, that there came a point when insisting it was below them was a way to disguise that they did not even know how to do such simple things.

*Selfwerksaamheid* may seem entirely self-evident to many people in the contemporary world, but in South Africa the practice of having domestic helpers and gardeners is entirely normal, there is no expectation that a house should nor could be run solely by its occupants. Some people I spoke to outside Orania also explained that they are grateful to be in a fortunate position, and since they can employ someone who otherwise could not meet their daily needs, they do so.

*Selfwerksaamheid* also involves adaptations outside the home. Ebert Terblanche pointed out that the availability of cheap labour in South Africa means the country has a different attitude to work accomplishing tasks than other countries: instead of using a machine, a team of labourers are used.

Plenty of people have told me that there are people who believe in the ideals of Orania, but the prospect of cleaning their own houses either deters them from coming, or influences their decisions to leave after a period. There are others in Orania who do not agree with *volkseie arbeid*, because it would be much easier and cheaper to find workers without this restriction. This applies to some of the surrounding farms, and also some of Orania's supporters who do not live in the town.

Celeste van Niekerk once asked me how my mother had managed her time while she raised children, worked, and attended to the household, seeking advice on how one person can manage all so many time consuming demands simultaneously. Riana at the stationers' told me she had previously been thoroughly dependent on her

maid, and on moving to Orania, discovered that she could actually do her own housework and make her own yoghurt – a process she would never have come to if not forced out of her habit. It allowed her to appreciate processes and take pride in them. There are a few domestic cleaners in Orania who clean public areas and some who help with housework and childcare. With regard to the latter, the same kinds of arguments can apply about domestic employers not doing all of their own housework, but thereby providing a livelihood for someone else. There are also limited kinds of unskilled work available for women, although a women's residential facility was established in 2012.

Work is the point where the ideological and practical aspects of building a *volkstaat* meet. The discrepancy between how the place is imagined and how it actually looks comes out in the implementation. It is at this point where habits and ideals align or collide, and existing structures hamper change, and the ways financial institutions work or the funds available influence practice. Furthermore, work is the site of action.

### **ORANIA'S CORPORATE STRUCTURE**

The town of Orania is privately owned, which is part of the reason it is able to maintain a degree of independence from the structures around it. *Orania Bestuursdienste* (OBD) was formed by the original people who bid for and then bought Orania, on behalf of Avstig. The town is run as a shareholding company (*aandeleblok maatskappy*), which means that the purchase of land is the purchase of a share in the company, and the board of the company Vluytjieskraal Aandeleblok (VAB) operates as the town council (*dorpsraad*). While VAB is the main operator of Orania, OBD and a few other companies operate in and around the town. Additionally there has been some controversy over the sale of land being sold as Orania land by another company, Kambro, and is not serviced by Orania's town infrastructure. The difference between VAB and Kambro is that the latter is strictly an 'agricultural cooperative' rather than shareholding corporation, meaning that what is sold is a long-term lease rather than a share. However, most of Orania's land is technically a share in VAB, represented by de facto ownership of a piece of property. This means that the share can be sold and inherited, as long as the corporation exists.

Since strictly speaking it is not private land but a share, which provides rights to a certain piece of land, that is purchased, an ordinary house mortgage is not available from banks. The Orania Spaar en Krediet Kooperasie (Orania Savings and Credit Cooperative, OSK) was established so that loans could be provided for those wishing to buy land in Orania. Unless people can purchase a house outright, they must take a loan with OSK, but I am unsure as to the conditions of these loans, guarantors and what the process is for defaulters. In 2010 a representative from the Reserve Bank visited Orania and reviewed the OSK's procedures and approved the upgrade of its status to Cooperative Bank.



The front of the ora, representing Afrikaner history (Ø10), Art (Ø20), culture (Ø50), and Orania (Ø100) (<http://www.orania.co.za/geldstelsel/>).



The reverse of the ora with a picture of pecans, signatures, and advertisements

Orania has generated much curiosity on account of having its own money – or more accurately, exchange coupon. The *ora* was introduced so as to stimulate the local economy by having an exchange medium that is only valid locally. The *ora* is accepted as payment within the town on a 1:1 basis with the rand, sometimes receiving a 5% discount on purchases. Purchases are for the most part made with rand, and smaller denominations only exist using rand coins. When people purchase *ora* from the bank for use, the money they use to purchase the *ora* is invested within the town and interest is earned this way on the original investment. It is additionally a security measure, since the *ora* are worthless to outsiders, and the rand which they represent are in the bank.

One of the arguments I heard against Orania and the few other developments like it, is that in investing money into a corporation, people are financially vulnerable to the fortunes of the project. While Orania's small economy has proved the undoing of many dreams individually, everybody is financially sensitive to its collective fate. Many people's assets will be invested in this corporate entity which is subject to an additional kind of risk on top of market variations, which is the survival of the *volkstaat* entity. In a very material sense, people's futures are at stake in this project, posing the question of why people are willing to invest so much in this project whose prospects may be positive but outcome uncertain. Is Orania a pooling of risk? The risk to existence outside Orania may be seen as greater than that affecting the fortunes of the VAB, or of a different kind: a cultural or physical existence is under threat in South Africa, but there is a material vulnerability in Orania.

There was a debate in the earlier years of the town between whether a license system or free market should operate. If there is, for example, enough business for one person to earn a suitable income from a real estate business, is it better to grant one person a license to that industry in the town, or allow competition, although it means two people cannot earn a suitable income simultaneously? The dispute was eventually settled in favour of the latter, although it seems to have produced much tension within the community. Two young men who had grown up in the town said they had not spoken to each other during that time because their families had been on opposite sides of the dispute.

September 2010 saw the restructuring of the town council into a format intended to be more friendly towards overseeing development. The existing structure, which effectively involved Kobus van der Merwe doing everything, saw him specialising in the maintenance of community services, with the former coordinator of the Elim workers project, Willie du Plessis, in social support, and Ebert Terblanche as head of corporate investment. Frans de Klerk, head of the Orania Beweging, shifted to a new position created to oversee these three branches and coordinate development. Part of the reason for this restructure was that most of the existing subdivisions of land were occupied, and there was a need to move into the areas which have not previously been built on. There was a view that this further development should be handled in a more structured and planned manner than heretofore. There is a requirement especially for cheap housing, except that the cost of providing water, sewerage, electricity and roads to these new plots is exceedingly expensive as services must be installed from scratch.

### **HOUSING MARKET**

People investing in land are often from outside, moving to Orania, so it is these people with incomes outside of Orania's small economy who are the main influence on the housing market in the town, putting it out of reach of many residents. The local economy sets the salaries that all must live on, but people who were retirees or middle-class outside set the price of housing. Just like people must save to emigrate overseas, they must also to a lesser extent save to move to Orania.

Orania has undergone a housing boom in the last 3-5 years, with a large increase in the number of houses which were not already there with the purchase of the town. Some of these are in developments by the river, on the crest above the *grootdorp*, and on land in Orania West where houses were taken down between the departure of the Department of Water Affairs in 1987 and Orania's purchase. However, due to the size of the plots and the fact that they are newly built, for many residents these houses are not affordable for purchase or rent.

The cost of building new houses and the shortage of vacant plots of land means there is currently a shortage in mid-range houses for sale, and there has long been a shortage of rental properties. These mostly rely on existing utilities



connections. In 2010 there were investigations into the cost of installing new infrastructure, determining that it would add R70-80,000 to the price of newly divided plots of land. This would take the cost of a new home beyond the reach of those without a relatively high income or dual income household.

Ebert Terblanche pointed out that if an average Kleingeluk property costs R250,000, which is a smaller house and plot than the main part of the town, and the interest rate at OSK is 15%, then it would take two mid-range salaries to be able to afford a house. To purchase property in Orania requires having existing savings from previous employment outside Orania, or saving from two salaries: it is impossible for a single person or even two people on average salaries to buy a house in Orania. It is only two salaries of around R6000 that will provide enough to cover living expenses and a loan, which puts constraints upon raising a family.

### **TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOURCES OF INCOME**

Orania's economy is based on its rural location and its development as a *volkstaat*. Farming and tourism are Orania's largest industries. For example, Orania is the largest producer of pecans in South Africa, collectively comprised of a number of plantations owned by different people. Vegetables, olives and sheep are also part of the local agricultural economy, and dairy production comes and goes. Most of the large commercial farms in the area grow grain, alternating *mielies* (maize) and wheat.

For a town so small and remote, Orania has a surprisingly large tourist industry. There are a fluctuating number of guest houses and self catering accommodation, and a large complex by the river incorporating a 12 room four star hotel, chalets, camping, a weekly and a Sunday restaurant, and a spa facility. Over the course of January and February 2010 all of the town's accommodation was regularly booked out. Most tourists are supporters of Orania and investors, some are prospective residents, some are family of residents, and some merely curious. This industry supports many other local industries, such as those related to construction, laundry, as well as gardening/maintenance and supermarkets, and has a follow-on effect to the whole community. Some residents decided to invest in Orania during or after spending their holidays there.

At the moment the building boom in Orania has meant that there are several teams of builders operating in the town. This industry provides work for the architect, men with earth moving equipment, builders, plumbers, electricians, and also the planning and development people at the town council. Orania's public sector, more or less consisting of the town council, the Orania Beweging and associated social support, is the main site of professional jobs. There are also a number of people employed at the two schools, sometimes as their only job, other times to supplement or supplemented by other work. There are a wide variety of small businesses, from shops and jewellers to hairdressing and beauty, souvenir shops and pecans, a coffin maker and gardeners. Larger businesses include a dog food factory, and two hardware stores and supermarkets.

A lot of people have to save up to come to Orania or set up an external income, adapt their business, or get into a new or broader field. Some professionals set up their businesses outside Orania to operate without them being physically present, or being able to run it remotely. This means that there are lawyers and accountants and an architect operating from Orania. Dawie van Niekerk operates his computing business from his home in Orania, with most clientele in Gauteng. Christiaan van Zyl, the architect, was initially in the same situation but in recent years his work has come exclusively from in and around Orania.

It is difficult to get by financially in Orania because it is a very small town with limited resources and market. People say things like that you can make a small fortune there, but only if you start with a large one. There are people who have come to Orania and been unable to establish themselves in a financially sustainable way, and have left the town broke and embittered. Jan and Elica Joubert had to leave Orania but returned once they had established a business, as their skills as teachers could not be used at that point. Earning a living means that people have to adapt, and whilst some people are able to fill a niche, often there is not sufficient demand for people to get by. There are examples of people who come to Orania wanting to invest which does not work according to plan. Some leave, some continue on either because their commitment to Orania's ideals persists, or in some cases, because whilst it may be difficult to continue on in Orania, it would be impossible to begin again elsewhere with limited means remaining.

In some cases people shift to areas they are not trained in. This has two sides. It allows people to explore creatively, and be assessed by their abilities rather than formal qualifications, and provides the space for people with natural talent. It can however lower the quality of the outcome so things get done, but not to a professional standard – there are stories and examples of sub-standard building and so forth. This informality and flexibility in the labour market is partly out of necessity, but also recognises that people's abilities may lie outside their qualifications, and reflects Orania's general spirit of participation over expertise. The need to create or exploit a niche in order to make a living is very much in evidence in Orania, but this is not always a hindrance, Orania is the making of some people. The construction industry especially provides real profits. Sometimes the size of the town and informality of the structures provide opportunities which would not be in reach elsewhere. Ebert, for example, was head of corporate investment at age 27, a managerial position unusual for someone at an early stage of his career – even if only within a small town. If enthusiasm can make up for limited experience, people can prove themselves in the course of their employment rather than prior to it.

Orania is remarkable for a remote town, in that there are a number of very highly educated and qualified people. The converse of the above discussion is a carpenter who was apparently formerly a professor of mathematics. A large proportion of Orania's population are retirees, who have means independent of the town's small economy. Some work in any case, as involvement in society is encouraged – additionally, many useful services are provided by skilled people, such as the dentist, who have retired to the town.

There have been plans for large developments of retirement homes. Although one of the major touted projects may not happen, smaller facilities are being built. The argument for retirement facilities, although it would involve an increase in the town's already high proportion of elderly citizens, is that, unlike young couples, they have the money to purchase property outright, but will still support the economy through living there and medical and aged care services, which would in turn provide a livelihood for younger families. In this respect, people working in the South African labour market which for so long favoured whites, allows them to be self-sufficient in their retirement and in turn benefit Orania.

## **ELIM**

One of the main sources of manual labour and general employment works through Elim, a residential program for getting young men jobs. There was at one stage a similar program for women, and this was re-established in 2012. The objective of Elim is to provide support and assistance to young Afrikaner men. They can be trained in new areas, and those coming from difficult social circumstances can be helped in a disciplined but caring environment. Elim is intended to provide strong discipline and encourage a work ethic, with its directors Willie and Debbie du Plessis fulfilling the roles of adoptive uncle and aunt to the young men. Workers are expected not to drink alcohol (nor of course to take drugs, as is usually added).

Some of these men are unskilled or low-skilled labourers who have trouble competing in the labour market, made even more difficult due to affirmative action which gives preference to those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. The workers live at Elim but work for various tradesmen in the town. They can be seen at building sites, tending gardens and crops, harvesting and in specialised trade work.

Elim is simultaneously at the heart of Orania and its periphery, the means by which the negatives of the outside world are seen to enter in, and the means by which Orania demonstrates that it lives by its principles. However, aside from ideological arguments, I also heard that one official admitted, in a moment of surprising candour, that white labourers are used because they are not unionised, thus removing the risk of affronting South Africa's very strong trade unions. Orania's ideological core does have links to the predominantly Afrikaans trade union Solidarity (*Solidariteit*). Solidarity's roots lie in the protection of white mine workers and now state that their purpose is to protect workers who belong to minorities who are now disadvantaged by affirmative action (<https://solidariteit.co.za/en/wat-maak-solidariteit-uniek/>).

## **EXPLOITATION? CLASS AND LABOUR**

Elim workers earn R120 per day, although this can be slightly more at the discretion of their employers. This provides around R2760 for a month's work, and if basic accommodation costs R400 a month or R600 for individual units, the remaining

money is quite low. This salary is also below the minimum threshold for South African income tax (SARS).

Outsiders sometimes argue that in Orania cheap black manual labour is merely replaced with cheap white workers, with the same consequences of social stratification. However, when I mentioned the fact that it appeared that Elim workers were being exploited, I was told that the general range of salaries in Orania is lower than it is in other parts of South Africa. Teachers earn R2500-R5000 per month, with variations between the two schools, which is a very modest income for a professional job. This also means that a person with a degree can earn less than a manual labourer, in this case reflecting the reverse of the complaints of those manual labourers. It is quite often acknowledged that people must work for the love of it in Orania, but one school teacher admitted that even though she loves teaching, the extremely low pay means she feels underappreciated by her work being undervalued.

Ebert, who was head of development at the time, explained that a professional job in Orania will provide around R6000 a month, compared to an equivalent job outside Orania paying up to three times that. In Orania's public service positions, the difference in salary between the bottom and the top will not be greater than a factor of five, compared with pay discrepancies in South Africa (which can range from half an Orania labourer's wage to 40-R60,000 for a top professional job) which can be in the vicinity of a factor of thirty. This relative frugality of the top rung not earning more than five times the bottom rung will not necessarily apply to jobs other than those at the Orania Beweging and the Dorpskantoor. André Coetsee, operating in the hospitality industry, said that sometimes guests complain about the quality of the service in Orania, not understanding that the wages that are paid would get them the *crème de la crème* of the service industry outside Orania. If this is true then it seems that wages at the top are lower and wages at the bottom higher than elsewhere, making it in fact relatively egalitarian.

Roelien, one of the jewellers, suggested that the perceived class difference is not based on how much they are actually paid, but on a distinction between indoor and outdoor work. The actual distinction is between manual and professional work, where the latter is seen as privileged. Yet one could certainly not generalise and say that manual work is undervalued, since in some ways it is romanticised. But there is

a lot of overlap between people with or without higher education, and indoor or outdoor jobs. Some friends knew a carpenter they knew who had previously been a mathematics professor, and other former professors spent time gardening (Chris Jooste) or milking cows (Carel Boshoff). In Orania it is not the case that people view manual labour as something reserved for lower class people, even if for some people manual work is still a novel activity. It is an interesting question where the perception comes from that workers in Orania are being exploited. Does the perception of workers being exploited come from the professional class, some of whom are new to housework, viewing workers as low status, or is it from those who associate their own labour as befitting black people? Does this relate to their perception of the relative wealth of others? Are different qualities of financial management involved in creating an apparent difference between those who are well off or not?

Some people commented that if I wanted to know about Orania I should go to Elim, implying it sat at the heart of the community. On many other occasions, however, people spoke of Elim workers as people not to be trusted. One employer commented that he would prefer to have the team of black workers he had had before he moved to Orania. 'These Elim workers, their hearts are in the right place, but they just don't do what I ask them to do.' He claimed he has left them unsupervised to complete a task, and they provide creative reasons for not doing it as they were meant to, but ultimately the process has to be undone and repeated, costing time and money. The curious matter about this comment is that it gave preference to black workers by criticising the available white workers, but also that the content bears some similarity to what people say about the shortcomings of black workers which are invoked to account for the disorganised state of South Africa.

I once heard someone complaining quite openly that Elim workers are 'treated like *kaffirs*' by the rich people in Orania, although it is they who have built Orania. Whilst on the one hand, those at Elim are peripheral members of the community since they often do not stay long term, are not individually contextualised by having a family, and occupy an unusual social position, on the other hand, it can be argued they are not as financially undervalued as they claim. The only issue I encountered was a less than rigid adherence to safety standards on building sites

which put workers at risk – yet this does not form part of the argument regarding ill-treatment.

The trade union Solidarity had argued with some of the mines that if the proportion of jobs in the higher levels must reflect the racial demographic of South Africa, then so too must the jobs at the lower levels. One of the young men who had been given one of these jobs in the mine shafts was asked for his views at the end of his first day. He commented that he had expected something a bit more stimulating. This was understood by one of Solidarity's leaders to mean that even now a young undereducated man expected that on account of his white skin he should not receive a bottom rung job. Even whilst Solidarity is confronting South Africa's means of economic redistribution, this suggests that they also encounter some workers with unrealistic expectations of their prospects.

In a very literal sense, Elim workers are occupying the place of black labourers, as the buildings which house it were former black workers hostels. (Some of these hostel buildings now house the CVO School but are more obviously transformed for a new purpose.) Labour compounds form a place in the white South African imagination, being home to the masses of black mine workers and therefore often sites of protest and strikes. A hostel of white workers on the periphery of a rural town could easily recall the image of migrant labour compounds, where white people would not ordinarily be found at the bottom strata. If they are in need of upliftment they must have fallen, and so may have suspicious pasts. Elim workers usually have no family in the town to provide social context. There are occasionally teenage pregnancies in Orania, scandalous on account of these relations taking place outside of marriage. Even if men from Elim are not often involved, fears about the corruption of young women are placed on them. Although Elim workers are arguably paid relatively well in the context of Orania's economy, it is another matter whether they are filling the social position of black labourers. In this respect their labour is regarded both practically and symbolically as integral to Orania's existence. However, they form a collection of individuals on the social periphery.

Discourse about the rich and the poor within Orania was invoked in the course of church sermons about the virtue of humility, as an explanation of the fact that those who attend the cultural events in Orania are mostly middle class, or

people's complaints about employers in the abstract. The problem was that it was never clear who the rich exploiters of Orania were. There are a few successful businessmen, but they were often reported as caring for their employees beyond expectations. Even if opinions on employers differ, there is a disproportionate dislike for the rich than the social environment might justify. Someone else who spoke with resentment of the rich, referred to those who do not work for their success and instead inherit privilege. He had great respect for those he considered self-made men. Again, who might have inherited wealth is not empirically obvious.

A lot of people who own property have done so with money earned outside Orania, and some of these rent out houses. People in that position are less likely to suffer from the day-to-day financial precariousness that average residents do. Even if landowners are resented for their relative wealth, it is they who enable homes to be rented to those who cannot afford to buy.

Some friends argued that Orania is very egalitarian – people are criticised for choosing luxury over mere practicality – and yet conversely it is assumed that if you are walking instead of driving, it is because you cannot afford a car. There is a kind of inverse class snobbery where those who display prosperity are criticised. This would appear to remove the suggestion that people in Orania are merely replicating the class system of greater South Africa, since they do not have domestic workers and there are very few ostentatious displays of wealth, certainly not in the form of houses. A jeweller in Pretoria bemoaned the general lack of subtle taste, complaining that most customers prefer their wealth to be ostentatious.

These same friends, who are in professional jobs, suggested that money management skills might help to create a difference between those who consider themselves insufficiently paid, and their perception that others are better paid. Even with professional jobs they could not afford to buy lunches every day, but many labourers can be seen buying food and cigarettes every day, perhaps not cognisant of the cumulative cost (the labourers who live at Elim also do not have mortgages and families to pay off, which lessens their actual financial pressures). Thus people who make the most of their salaries are perceived as rich, even if they are not earning more relative to others who are less adept at financial management.



A hospitality worker explained why it is mostly the same group of people from the 'middle class' of Oraniërs who attend the cultural celebrations. I was told that the working class have to put up with their bosses mistreating them all week, so they will not go and socialise together with them when they do have a day off for a public holiday. On the whole this explanation as to why they do not attend cultural events did not seem to explain that at all, if the class division is not as sharp as this would imply.

### **WOMEN'S ROLES**

Orania's women are economically active, both for philosophical and financial reasons. A *boeremeisie* (Afrikaans/farm girl) is proud, social, the term invoking a girl at home on a farm, and contrasted to the 'English rose' image of a woman. An Afrikaans woman is a mother but also strong, maternal but not necessarily feminine. While this is part of the broader understanding of women in Afrikaans society, it is both reinforced and played out slightly differently in Orania.

In practice, almost everyone in South Africa who can afford a domestic servant has one, whether someone who stays on the property or comes once a week. By contrast, in Orania most women are responsible for the upkeep of their own households, for shopping, washing and cooking. It is also a different environment because children are able to be more independent and it is safe for them to make their own way home from school.

At the Heritage Day celebration the occasion which marks the birth of Paul Kruger, several people told stories they had read from history. The final story was about a woman left alone on the farm during the Anglo-Boer War when her husband was away. She was on her knees scrubbing the floor, when a British soldier entered and asked her where the lady of the house was. She retorted that he was already speaking with her. This story was taken to mean that an Afrikaans woman was obviously made of sturdier stuff than English women, and a woman is not beneath cleaning her own house. Most women take up this role once in Orania, having been accustomed to the assistance of domestic workers. Even in Orania's environment where labour is a virtue, without domestic workers housework falls to women.

Many of Orania's women are strong and outspoken but still adhere to the notion that a man is the head of the household. Once at the boardgames evening there was a discussion between people who argued over whether a woman should adopt her husband's views, or whether she may differ from or even vocally disagree with him. Whilst this was an extreme view about whether subordination was desirable, the form of women's lives usually conforms to structures of patriarchy. This is not to say that women do not hold influence within domestic and other circles; indeed, some of the most strongly opinionated and defiant women still insisted that their husbands were and should be in charge.

It was the Kaalvoet Vrouens (Barefoot Women) group whose idea it was to build Orania's renowned *koeksister* monument. The monument is at some level a bit of a joke, as the *koeksister* is a sweet syrupy pastry, but was built to remember women who supported all kinds of fundraising efforts by making *koeksisters* for sale at markets, schools and church sales. Thus, the women have always had an economic role or responsibility, but which is usually considered secondary or supportive.

The Vroue Landbouvereeniging (VLV) meets once a month. Literally the Women's Agricultural Union, it is similar to the Women's Institute in the UK and other such rural women's initiatives. While it involves women teaching each other about food presentation and arts and crafts, it is also educational, discussing practical things such as recycling and generally encouraging women's enterprise. It reinforces the ideal of the rural Afrikaans woman as being generally accomplished in all matters to ensure the smooth running of households and the community. Resourcefulness, ingenuity and good management are virtues. One lady observed that the attendance shows it is a very middle class phenomenon. She noted that many of the skills that can be learnt through the VLV would benefit the thrifty and also the less well-off housewife, but they do not tend to be there.



A piece of embroidery at the VLV's stall at the Volkstaat Skou (Orania Show)

Orania is fairly typical of the Afrikaans mainstream in disapproving of single mothers, considering it important for children to have a mother and a father. There is structural pressure within Orania that couples who have a baby should marry, so that the baby will be raised within a nuclear family. Nevertheless, whilst this was the ideal, it was far better to be a single mother than to marry a useless or abusive man. A young man who left to study suggested that even outside Orania, the women who attend university primarily aspire to getting married and starting a family after graduating, rather than building their lives around a vocation or career path.

Motherhood and domestic life is reified, the proper woman is expected to be a wife and mother. But in Orania, although a woman's first priority is to her family, she can support her family and her community through a career. In fact, her income is likely to be important to the household, which is why there are plenty of home businesses. Orania re-emphasises women as capable, where being a wife and mother is complementary to rather than incompatible with a career.



Painted window panels in Betsie Verwoerd's house

### **THROUGH LABOUR TO FREEDOM**

The relationship of economics to society is at the heart of Orania's ideology. Labour is central to Orania as a precondition for the self-determination for which they strive, and also a practical matter of making this ideal a reality. The economic sphere is where the intertwining of intentionality and contingency is most evident. It is where the details which comprise the overarching ideology are negotiated so that it becomes material reality. It is uncompromising in some respects and flexible in others. Although certain principles must be adhered to, there are many ways in which they can be creatively applied, or circumvented. The economic sphere provides an illustration of the combination of old and new practices, tradition and resourcefulness, restriction and opportunity.

The thing which attracts attention to Orania is its whiteness, but this is the effect of an ideal of a self-sustaining Afrikaans community rather than necessarily a motive. The objective is for individuals and society to take responsibility for their own work and not expect others to fill these roles, and it is the implementation of this necessity which deters some people from coming. The size and scope of Orania's economy also prohibits some people from coming, or forces them to adapt their skills in a way that is sometimes liberating and sometimes crippling. The inevitable interdependence of an industrial society means that Orania's self-reliance cannot be taken to its logical conclusion: they cannot be entirely sealed off from the outside world. Yet this is not necessarily intended either, as their ideal is membership of a federation of South Africa, which would involve trade and cooperation.

It is the rights provided by South African private property and company law which allows Orania autonomy until such time as independence is feasible. Orania works within dominant economic structures and corporate shareholding law but its residents try to adapt them to be more cooperative and less exploitative, because they know from experience that exploitation is unsustainable. Orania's self-reliance is demonstrated through its use of Afrikaans labourers so that there is not a class division that coincides with colour. To the extent that there is a class difference, it has a social rather than financial basis.

Whilst in terms of the economy Orania involves a bit of working out the practical details together, there are other more potent and deep-rooted sites of conflict. Where people's differences have their foundation in religious beliefs, what is at stake is not only earthly survival but eternity.

## IV: THE COSMOLOGICAL ORDERING OF HUMANKIND

Christianity is an explicit part of life in Orania, but there are other deeper and more subtle ways in which people's understandings of a cosmological order founded in Christianity shape how they see the world and their place in it. Where Protestant Christianity is a cultural trait of Afrikaners and the notion of their being a nation in service to God is explicit, the interactions between Christian practice, church institutions, fundamental beliefs about the ordering of society, and political goals, play a role in making sense of Afrikaner identity.

Prof Carel argued that secularism is not a compromise between people of different faiths: it is a compromise of exactly that which is among the fundamental aspects of each people. He wrote his PhD thesis on the topic, but we never had the intended in-depth discussion about it. He argues that in a secular society, treating religion as something that can be left at the door mistakes it for a hat that people wear rather than a way of understanding, as inseparable from people as any other aspects of their identities. Parliamentary sittings are no longer opened with prayer, but it is arrogant to fail to ask for God's guidance in the important decisions that are made. This reasoning underlies the need for culturally separate social institutions, and, to the extent that institutions are easier to maintain in a monoethnic environment, territorial consolidation of ethnic groups. The need for faith to remain embedded in social life means rather that there should not be a distinction between religious and secular life.

There must nonetheless be a separation between church and state. Koos Kirsten recounted to me the history of the South African churches. It was the source of many problems that the church was a part of the state, and ministers paid by the government, under the British Colony and later also the Boer republics. The church must retain an independent conscience and therefore be free from the state's intervention, but that means institutionally speaking, rather than the state being necessarily secular.

Religion holds an interesting place in Orania. Most people attend church once or sometimes twice on a Sunday, some hold their own home services (*huisdiens*) on days other than Sunday, all public meetings are opened with prayer, and cultural

events with a bible reading and prayer. The schools are explicitly Christian, as are all the organisations within the town and all residents of the town commit to the town's constitution whose first point is recognition of the triune God. The sabbath is observed with shops closed on Sundays, except for the Eureka supermarket being open for a few hours. A small restaurant was opened at the Oewerpark in late 2010, opening only on Sundays – the idea being that the women who work all week can also rest on Sundays.

Prayers are also said before meals, after food is served onto plates. The group members hold hands and thank God for the food and those who prepared it. Grace is led by the highest ranking male, and this happened almost always when dining with Afrikaners throughout the country. If a man was not present the hostess would pray. Prayers varied in length from a brief thanks to a general thanks for god's grace, sometimes including specific examples. Most people would only pray before sit-down meals, only one person I met prayed over a bowl of crisps, and a few people did not pray because they expected people to offer their thanks individually in their nightly prayers. In Orania, public gatherings are opened with a prayer, usually by the highest ranking male, who is senior in respect of age, social standing or piety.<sup>2</sup> On a few occasions Lida Strydom, who convened the weekly information meetings (*inligtingsvergaderings*) would pray, and on one occasion Johanna Pohl, a non-resident Orania supporter, opened a meeting with a bible reading.

Religiosity flows through everyday life in Orania, being both a constant implicit reference point and topic of conversation. However, the extent to which assumptions about moral behaviour are followed is another matter. This was exemplified by my friend Lizette's comment about people going to church on Sundays and then probably already complaining about fellow parishioners in the car on the way home. There is a broad assumption reflected in Oraniërs' comparisons between Orania and greater South Africa, that Christian values are the foundation of moral behaviour (even though South Africa is largely Christian), even though all people are invariably flawed. This means there is broad recognition that there are plenty of people whose faith is not borne out in moral conduct, whether it be

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<sup>2</sup> In a different context, a similar kind of precedence seemed to occur at a *braai*, where certain men took on the role of overseeing the cooking more often than others.

commercial or private matters or through the ubiquitous practice of *skinnering* (gossiping).

Nevertheless, standards of behaviour are couched in Christian terms. The fallibility of humans means that these standards are not expected to be attained, but are still used for illustrating principles and goals. As Ronald Stade (2014) points out, this unattainability is a logical consequence of morality, since if morals were universally adhered to they would just be called human behaviour.

As an explicitly Christian establishment, Orania of course is well equipped with Christian institutions and practices. However, as a small town of opinionated people, it is in fact equipped with *many* churches. There are in the vicinity of ten church congregations, including several other denominations and individuals who do not commune on the sabbath, or do so in family groups. Many residents were unsure as to how many churches there were and were surprised that I knew of ten, so there may even have been others. Two of these churches began during 2010. The shortage of Sundays in relation to the number of churches meant that I was able to attend some churches for up to two months but some only once, and others I was unable to find. The fact that all of the churches are Protestant, and many Calvinist, disguises the fact that they vary a lot within those parameters.

South Africans of continental European origin have historically belonged to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK, Dutch Reformed Church), which was the original church of the Company servants at the Cape. During the nineteenth century the Gereformeerde Kerk (GK, Reformed Church) and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK, Dutch Reformed Church) split off from the NGK, for theological as well as organisational reasons. These three *susterkerke* (sister churches) are the main churches among Afrikaners, with the NGK most prominent as the original church, reinforced due to its historical connection to the former National Party government. Whilst the literature on apartheid indicates that the NGK was a proponent of racial separation and hierarchy, this is no longer the case, and within Orania the NGK is derided by some as liberal. That 'liberal' perspective eventually acknowledged that the transition to democracy had to happen, that without it might have been civil war.



The time when signs of reform started to appear was the time when churches broke away, maintaining their theological justifications for the old order of things. The 1980s saw the formation of several new denominations. The Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK) split off from the NGK in protest against the NGK's withdrawal of support for apartheid and the reintegration of their mission churches, and has retained white congregations. During the apartheid period the NGK was cynically referred to as the National Party at prayer, and the reference to the APK as the 'KPK', or church of the Conservative Party (KP), which suggests a correlation between political views and religious outlook. Alternately, Koos Kirsten argued that the APK's separation was in protest to the NGK's pronouncement on the affairs of the government, thus inappropriately entangling the affairs of church and state. By this interpretation it was an anti-political move, rather than a political one. The KP arguably refused to consider the handover of power as an option, leaving its followers unprepared for the change that did come, suggesting that the APK retains a resistance to the new South African dispensation.

Several Israelite churches also formed in a similar time period. These churches' theology has its origins in the British Israel movement. There have been Pentecostal and charismatic churches in South Africa for a long time but they have become more popular since the Second World War. The restrictions of the South African state also increased since the middle of the twentieth century, but faith remained a legitimate area of self-expression.

### **THE TOWN'S CONGREGATIONS**

In the early years after Orania's establishment the reformed churches held their services together in the town's community hall. Partly a practical measure for a small community without ministers, it was also an attempt to unify the sister churches and overcome their (relatively minor) theological differences. Ministers of the different denominations would come from elsewhere on alternate Sundays, the denominations in rotation. However, for various reasons relating both to theology – visiting ministers were preaching from within their own denominations – and matters of inter-personal politics, the churches began to establish their own separate congregations. However, the APK always held its own services in a formal church

building, and today it is probably the largest formal congregation in the town. As people who belonged to other denominations not represented in the town moved to Orania, they established new churches in accordance with the denominations they belonged to, instead of assimilating into those that already existed.

People are generally brought up within a particular denomination through attending church with their parents. If a woman marries a man who belongs to a different denomination she is expected to join the church of her husband. The reciprocal part of this arrangement, which is that the husband adopts his wife's language if they differ, does not seem to be adhered to as much. In Orania this means that church congregations often align with kin groupings. Sometimes it may also reflect family schisms, and social and political divisions. Some congregations have members who are associated in other contexts, in others, the church seems to provide the circumstance for people coming together, who would not otherwise meet. Yet the gradual branching off of denominations means that choice or at least the perception of more flexibility has become a factor in church membership in recent decades. Movement between churches may be more a manifestation of choice, of taste in worship style and social preferences, than deeper theological divisions. Johan said that although the denominations that he and Tanja belonged to did not differ very much, Tanja said that the *Gemeente van die Verbondsvolk* was *her* church, so it was he who changed churches after their marriage.

Religion is a very intimate thing and whilst people acknowledge their common pious Christianity, when focusing on the smaller theological but also social details, divisions emerge. Although Orania represents an attempt to unify Afrikaners, compromise is not easily reached, so religious unity remains an ideal. Orania's churches play out individualism and obstinacy (*hardkoppigheid*) rather than the communalism that the town is meant to reflect. When the emphasis is on the town as distinguished from the outside, the emphasis is on the fact that they are all Christian, and thus united. When speaking of matters inside the town, divisions come to the fore and in practice they are very splintered, and the intimacy of religion is on display for others to judge.

The NGK and APK have their own dedicated church buildings, with the APK being in the main part of town. Although the NGK is the most common church denomination among Afrikaners, within Orania the APK is the most well-attended. This marks a distinction between Orania and the outside. Dominee Adam Boshoff, the brother of Carel Boshoff, was the APK minister, although he also served the congregation in Hopetown, so there were often visiting ministers. There was a Sunday service at 9:30am and a *biduur* (prayer hour) in the evening. The congregation drank tea and coffee together after the morning service and some members assisted with Sunday school for the children.

The NGK, located on the road just before Kleingeluk, was led by Carel Boshoff. If he was not present a sermon was read by an elder such as Renus Steyn. The church interior is plain but with a raised platform section at the front, with wooden panelling. It is the only church that has pews rather than chairs, which lends itself to feeling the most like a building exclusively for religious practice, although the APK has a bell tower on one side.

The reformed churches and with them Afrikaners are usually associated with Calvinism, depicted as a stern discipline with a focus on predestination. However, when I asked Prof Carel to explain what Calvinism actually meant, he explained that the central tenets were: *solī deo Gloria*, *sola scriptura*, and *sola fide*; that is, that all is to the glory of God, that the bible is complete and infallible, and that faith rather than only good deeds leads to salvation. This explanation of Calvinism suggests a fairly general Christian philosophy.



The Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, Orania's oldest dedicated church building



The former squash court, now home to Orania Evangeliese Aksie

There are three congregations that are evangelical in style. The Maranata church had a dedicated building in Kleingeluk at the time of research, but they have since built a new church building. The Eenheid van Geloof (Union of faith) church met in a large tent on a piece of land behind the Eureka supermarket and the Volkskombuis (*volk* kitchen) butchers. A sign appeared on the wall of the squash court in early 2010 indicating that it had become a home for a church group, named Orania Evangeliese Aksie Interkerklik (Orania Evangelical Action Interdenominational).

The OEA had fitted the squash court out with chairs and a lectern and other decorations, although the occasional shuttlecock was still present in the rafters. The one service I attended was led by the minister, Frik de Meyer, but his wife Eve also participated by leading the singing. The service was very interactive with the minister checking to ensure parishioners (including English-speaking anthropologist) understood the bible text he had read and repeated. The sermon was on Revelations and put forward the view that people must be prepared at all times for the last judgement, which was substantiated with observations on the evils of intoxication, that men, as the pillars of their families, had to remain uncorrupted, and the fact that all was not as it should be in the town.

At Maranata the services were not always led by the minister, Oom Kallie Kriel, but by other senior members of the congregation including Oom Kallie's wife, Tannie Naomi. One service consisted mostly of people's emotionally charged testimonies of what God did for them. Instead of hymns, songs were sung, to the accompaniment of an organ and a guitar, with the words being displayed to the congregation on an overhead projector – sometimes in focus and sometimes the right way up.

Tannie Naomi once told me that although she was Afrikaans, she was brought up in a household with an English-speaking stepfather, so she was literate in both cultures. When she and her husband first moved to Orania they attended the NGK but in their hearts they were Pentecostal. It was only after they had enough standing in the community that they felt they could deviate from the Reformed tradition and establish a charismatic church. She told me that once a black man had come to visit Oom Kallie and someone had asked, on whose authority was he permitted to be in

the town? Oom Kallie responded with, 'On my authority!' A rumour had it that Oom Kallie had been involved with the radical Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB), and was among those who disrupted the negotiations around the transition to democracy at Kempton Park, but this was before he had found God.

The Eenheid van Geloof congregation meets Friday evenings, Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. It was established by a minister in Pretoria, to whom God appeared in a dream, telling him that the future was in Orania. As of 2010 he was in the process of moving many of his congregation from Pretoria to Orania. The services were held in the tent until a church was built, and services conducted by a local minister. The fact that the minister, Pastoor Taljaard was also qualified as a mechanic, fireman and paramedic, and there was talk of establishing a funeral service, were additional things to suggest that his involvement in Orania would come to shape the town in a new way.

Three of the congregations meet in the Community Hall complex. The Evangelies Gereformeerde Kerk (EGK, Evangelical Reformed Church) only meets once a month in the middle of the day, when the minister comes from Kimberley with his family. A few members attend other churches on other Sundays. During the one service I attended the minister spoke of the broad acknowledgement that the end times were approaching, with society in such disarray and conflict and chaos on the rise – supported even by the number of films in recent years that are about apocalyptic scenarios. The approaching end-times were discussed in several churches. He also urged his congregation not to use the Automatic Teller Machine (cash machine) in the Wynhuis (Wine House) bottle store, as other people could be left in doubt as to their abstinence from alcohol.

The Gemeente van die Verbondsvolk (GvdV, Congregation of the Covenant People) meet in the same room as the EGK. The morning begins with the stacked plastic chairs being placed into rows, lengthwise along the room, so people sit facing the open windows. Beyond is the dry scrub of the Karoo, the main part of the town invisible beyond the curve of the hill. The whole network of GvdV congregations throughout the country, with perhaps a thousand members, is led by one minister. He

is based in Kuruman but travels to all the congregations so as to be able to conduct communion once a quarter, and so his sermons are recorded and distributed on CD. At the beginning of the service André Coetsee offers his welcome and some comments, and then some hymns are sung. These are read from the Gemeente's own hymn book, which does not have music printed nor is there musical accompaniment, so relies on people knowing the tunes. The recording of an impassioned sermon is played on a stereo. The service is followed by tea and coffee, and sometimes rusks or the rock-hard ginger cookies from the town's baker which taste amazing when softened with coffee. Many of the members of the congregation are related through five sisters and their families – that is, Karin and her four younger sisters. Their mother, however, attends the Gereformeerde Kerk Oranjerivier because it is the denomination of her late husband.

There are other people who follow the Israel Visie (Israel Vision) who do not meet regularly. Whilst I was referred to Heinz as the contact for this group, whose name was given as Lewende Hoop (Living Hope), he said that it was not a congregation as such, but that people conducted family services and met together for services or lectures when visiting speakers or ministers came. I was thus unable to take part in Israel Visie services or find out much about it.

The Gemeente van die Verbondsvolk and Israel Visie are among the adherents of British Israelite theology. Israelite theology takes the view that the twelve tribes of Israel found in the Old Testament are not Jews, but groups who migrated north and form twelve nations of Europe. Thus, it is Europeans who are the chosen people, and Jesus was sent to save God's people, not all people. God, addressed as Yahweh, created gods and religions and cultures for different groups of people, whilst reserving most of his attention for his chosen people. Thus, Christianity is irrelevant to people who are not biologically descended from the European nations and belief in Jesus will not save them. This amounts to an interpretation of the bible to say that only pure-blooded Caucasian people are God's chosen people and can be saved. A sceptic's reasoning went as follows: the bible teaches that you should love your brother, but you do not. Israelite theology appeals because it teaches that some people are not your brothers, so you do not have to love them. This reactionism is reflected in John Wilson's (1968) description of Israelite

theology in Britain, where it originated, as being favoured by those who profited from the Empire and later felt its decline most keenly. In the context of the 1930s, “British Israelism expressed the revulsion to Bolshevism of many who enjoyed the privileges of an older status system” (Wilson 1968:54).

Yet from another point of view, it can be interpreted as incorporating cultural relativism into religion. Karin explained that when she worked as an archaeologist, she had interviewed an old Basotho lady. This lady told her, ‘my God is my father, my God looks like me; your God is your father, your God looks like you.’ In other words, the recognition that not everybody has to have the same religion came from both sides. Groups have religious beliefs that fit with their world views: Christian missionary work is unnecessary as each group is intended to have its own religion, and would only serve to dislocate people from their cultures.

Also meeting in the Gemeenskapsaal complex, the Gereformeerde Kerk Oranjerivier (GK Oranjerivier) have a room laid out with a lectern, chairs and an electronic keyboard, decorated with a few ornaments. They meet for tea after the service in another room with couches, tables and a piano, where the organist Esmien also holds music classes. There is a small adjoining kitchen where the post-service post-tea washing up is done, a sociable activity dominated by women as at most churches. During the two months I attended the congregation, their minister, based at De Aar, came every second week, also serving a congregation in Strydenburg. On Sundays when the minister was not there, a church elder would read a sermon – this also happened at other churches if a minister was not present. He came once a quarter for communion, and this would involve the whole group meeting to *braai* the evening prior to communion at 9am. On the occasion that I attended the church *braai* we discussed the relative religiosity of different parts of the world, and the difference that believing or not believing in an interventionist divinity makes to one’s actions.

When the minister moved, the selection of a new minister was done by receiving applications from the national GK. In the absence of the physical presence of candidate ministers, descriptions were read out, and the congregation voted. I am not sure about other Afrikaans churches, but voting is the practice for Presbyterian congregations. In the intervening time, Koos Kirsten, the minister from the other

congregation preached there also, meaning that he was temporarily minister at two separate congregations of the same denomination in the same small town. The other Gereformeerde Kerk Dordt (GK Dordt) congregation met in a room in the CVO School. Koos Kirsten has been their minister since his arrival in the town in 2001. The Gereformeerde tradition (in Orania) was distinguished by the liturgy that was read at the beginning of the service, which included the Ten Commandments (as did the APK's service, which was similar). The *geloofsbeleidenis*, the Apostles' Creed, is also read. Men stood up to pray while women remained seated.

It seems curious that there should be two GK congregations in Orania. The account of their origins is long and convoluted, and involves clashes between individuals and differing loyalties. But it is perhaps worth recounting here the elements of the argument which are theological.

The way Koos recounted the story is as follows. When the British took on the Cape Colony they took over some degree of control over the church, and the salaries of ministers were paid by the state. In an attempt to anglicise the population and remedy the shortage of ministers, they brought Scottish ministers who were sent to Leiden to learn Dutch. But Leiden was also home to a new theological approach, including a new hymn book which went beyond the original psalms in the bible and was designed for emotional upliftment. The intervention of the British authorities meant that education and religion were being anglicised, and the liberalisation and deviation from the strict interpretation of the Bible added a religious element to the motivations for the Great Trek. Once the trekkers reached the other side of the Orange River, beyond the Cape Colony, they established the Orange Free State (OVS, Oranje Vrystaat) and the Transvaal Republic (ZAR, Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek). However, both of these republics maintained control over religion by providing the salaries of ministers. A group met in Rustenburg to apply to the church in the Netherlands to send them an appropriately scripturally conservative minister, which resulted in Dirk Postma's arrival in South Africa. Together they established the Gereformeerde Kerk, which returned to the theological principles of the Synod of Dordt.

Since the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 the churches have been separate from the state, with the disbanding of the republics leaving the



churches independent. Ministers are supported through tithes from the congregation, in accordance with the bible. The social changes that followed the Second World War went hand in hand with an increase in the variety of churches. Koos argued that the strengthening of state control over people's lives left the churches as an independent place for personal release. Although the GK is the most theologically strict denomination, the recognition of all people as fellow children of God means they can be socially liberal. The primary reason for separate congregations is their de facto creation through different languages, although Koos sometimes preaches in black non-Afrikaans-speaking congregations with an interpreter.

The GK members in Orania began to divide over the question of whether it was appropriate to try and unite the reformed churches through the group services. When the GK general synod approved a new translation of the psalms, some objected to the translations, which were done by people from outside the GK. The approval of changes to communion, so that the congregation was no longer required to sit around a large table and drink from one cup, as well as the approval of women office-bearers, stirred up further controversy and sharpened the division between the traditionalist and modernist Gereformeerdes. Although the GK Dordt objected to these changes, the GK Oranjerivier do not practice them either. One lady at the latter described the former, saying that they took everything that was conservative and made it more conservative. In both congregations, as well as the APK, men stand while women remain seated during prayers. Koos explained that it does not imply that they think women are less worthy but simply that God prescribes church practices in gendered ways. Both congregations have some very strong and outspoken women.

The argument signals different views on the place of people in relation to God and scripture. Yet even if these are reasons for two groups of Gereformeerdes disagreeing, their reasons for not being able to worship together are more likely interpersonal conflict. Personal disagreements play out in the medium of theology, so the division means that two socially cohesive and happy congregations exist rather than one fractured one.

The NHK usually met at the Volksskool, although on the occasion I attended, they met at the new Skinki Kofé café which was partly owned by some of its members. It was a small family group of the three Van Zyl brothers and their wives and children. A sermon was played from a CD and some prayers were said but the service was on the whole very comfortable and concise.

Not all Oraniërs attend church on Sunday. Some I had heard dedicated their Sunday mornings to learning about God by reading the Bible themselves. Konrad reasoned that if there is only one God then there can only be so many churches because people vary, and he would rather not have his spiritual education mediated by people who disagree with each other about what those lessons are. Rather, by reading the bible his understanding is mediated by the Holy Spirit.

Just as the churches in Orania are attended by people from the surrounding area, some people from the town attend church outside Orania. One such church was the charismatic church in Petrusville. The size and makeup of its congregation distinguishes it from those in Orania, and it was considered controversial by some to attend the ‘coloured’ (actually mixed) church in Petrusville. There are also workers at farms in the area who did not attend church in Orania, but I do not know where they went instead.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

On occasion the whole town does still attend religious service together, the main occasion being Geloftedag, the Day of the Covenant, celebrated on December 16<sup>th</sup>. In 2010 the service was in the Gemeenskapsaal, but had been held at the Oewerpark in 2009. The denomination of the minister who leads the service rotates each year, and often comes from outside, as will the speaker for the occasion. Although the hall was full and some people had to stand, it was still not the whole town’s population that was in attendance. As the room filled people were asked to bring in folding chairs if they had them in their cars – a common practice. The APK had held their own service, and some of their members joined the group service afterwards. Geloftedag differs from church services because it is also a public ceremony, so they have a historical talk in addition to a sermon.

For those who attend Geloftedag it is an earnest occasion, since attendance is in fulfilment of a vow made by Sarel Cilliers in 1838, which makes Afrikaners the holders of a covenant with God. Given that this event is the cornerstone of the Afrikaner religious historical myth, it is surprising that not all attended. Yet at neither the Geloftedag celebrations I observed in Orania nor at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria was the atmosphere quite as earnest as I had come to expect. It is a national day in the sense that many others are – comprising an element of ritual but much informality and waiting around for the formal part of the occasion. After the Geloftedag service in Orania there was a *braai* planned, with people dispersing and leaving only a few families for the planned community *braai*. In Pretoria some people had picnics on the grass around the monument, they were neither formally dressed nor in *voortrekker* costume, and there were some Asian tourists and Africans there also. The site where the covenant and the battle that followed took place, at Blood River, has some monuments and a museum with few artefacts and presenting a reasonably nuanced historical narrative. Unlike many places in South Africa, and surprisingly for a sacred Afrikaner site, it is actually open on a Sunday.

There is some historical debate about the precise details of the covenant and some doubt whether it even was made (see König & Keane 1980), and there are therefore questions about whether the vow must be fulfilled by all Afrikaners or only the descendants of Cilliers and those who made the covenant. But if it really is a covenant, then something is at stake if it is not fulfilled. Alex, visiting his cousin Ludwig in Orania, explained that there were some differences of opinion on whether the covenant could have been made to apply to all Afrikaners or only the descendants of those present.



Plaques stating the vow at Blood River/Ncome, KwaZulu Natal

### **WHAT DO THE DIFFERENCES MEAN? COMPARISONS AND GROUPINGS**

There is disagreement within all of the church congregations, to the point where it seems as if there is more variation within than between congregations. Both individuals and churches differed in which parts of the bible they took literally and which could be interpreted. Different churches also placed slightly different emphasis on the different elements of the triune God. The most important thing for Christians is to live according to the word of God, but it is precisely how to interpret the word of God that leads to the divisions. There are different ideas about what it means to be a good Christian. Being good means obeying God. All agree that there is no room for error in the bible, yet each of the denominations explicate and interpret it in different ways. Conversations about belief often led people to explain that at their church, the emphasis is on what scripture says, rather than what people say – unlike at other churches. The lack of actual information about other churches was illustrated by the rumour that one man was a Seventh Day Adventist because his shop was closed on Saturdays as well as Sundays.

Some of the denominations do not celebrate Christmas, for reasons which included the idea that Jesus was probably not born on December 25th, and that the

celebration is derived from pagan roots, and therefore un-Christian. Despite the various summer holiday festivities in the town, there was an absence of Christmas decorations either on display or for sale. It was said that some of those who do not celebrate Christmas had threatened a boycott, so those who wished to celebrate it were limited in their choice of presents and food. Others just avoided certain things without pressuring others to do the same. This included complaining that most Easter symbolism was derived from pagan fertility celebrations, though this did not extend as far as refusing chocolate eggs when they were offered. That said, I am not sure that all Christian events such as weddings had all symbolic elements verified as being purely of biblical Christian origin.

Questions about why people were in Orania often led into discussions about religion. Being where they were in life was due to it being God's will, they were all just trying to do what God wants them to do. The painter in the town, Marinda le Grange, whose daughter Maryna is one of the town's two jewellers, deferred thanks for the praise of their skill, saying that her and her daughter's talents were gifts from God. Even when more immediate causes, for example, brought people to Orania, divine influence is an implicit underlying cause.

Yet whilst the inseparability of political goals and individual paths from a divine purpose was stated, it was not always demonstrated. This was explained by Koos as a matter of people being people, thus inherent sinners, and other people would surely offer the same explanation. People need not always be consistent to their professed principles, yet this offers an example of the way in which people submit their circumstances to another authority.

For a little while there was a pile of leaflets at the Orania Beweging advertising a *gebedsaksie*, or prayer action, in the lead-up to December 16<sup>th</sup>. The group, not specific to Orania, encouraged the unity of the *volk* before God and the renewal of the vow of Blood River which is the basis of the covenant. A *gebedsaksie* was also mentioned at one of the Orania Beweging *volksraad vergaderings* (Afrikaner *volk* council meeting), indicating that prayer was regarded alongside political actions as a means for obtaining particular ends. Spiritual means are used alongside secular political systems to bring about certain ends.

Popular discourse which is sympathetic to Afrikaners emphasises the role of Christianity, particularly Calvinism, presenting the picture of Afrikaners from the *voortrekkers* onwards believing the group to be the Elect of God, having strong beliefs in divine destiny (eg. Michener 1981). Apart from the Israelite perspective, people in Orania did not generally talk about Afrikaners as the particular chosen group of God. God was inherent in all questions of destiny, and he was involved in the fortunes of Afrikaners as devout people, but not to the exclusion of others. If people said derogatory things about non-white people, they did not do so explicitly in reference to divine hierarchies, even if this was implicit in that God is involved in all matters.

The way in which God was thought to be involved with Afrikaners specifically rather than just individual Christians also varied between direct intervention and general guidance. The sermons of the GvdV seemed to discuss the Afrikaners' history more often than others, using the past and present circumstances for illustration or emphasis. Some sermons at the APK made reference to the Afrikaners' current position, but most focused more on theological or ethical matters relating to Christianity in general. Apart from the Israelite groups, perhaps the only theological argument for separation that I heard was at the APK. The sermon referred to Hosea 7: 8-11, in which Ephraim mixes among the different peoples, the result of which is that he ends up knowing nothing and losing his sense of identity or rootedness. Thus the *volk* must shield themselves from the influence of the *heidene* (heathens) by restricting their interactions with other groups; Afrikaners are being weakened without even noticing it. Yet an alternate interpretation of this passage is that it is a historical account of Israel's foreign policy at that time. If a theological point could be made about it, it would be about not being dependent on powerful friends, and not about losing identity through cultural contact (Cori Wielenga, personal communication 19/9/10). The extent to which the bible can be interpreted in different ways raises questions about how the bible is used to provide guidance.

It is precisely this issue which is raised in the way different churches regarded apartheid. In the NGK's 1986 policy document *Church and Society*, it is pointed out that although the bible is complete and infallible, making it the sole yardstick for evaluation, it is not a literal recipe book. It contains no particular policy for social,

economic or political problems because it is a spiritual guide (NGK 1987:6-8). It was *Church and Society* which marked the shift from the NGK's theological support for apartheid and its rejection of segregation as a justified social system. It superseded the policy of twelve years before, *Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture* (NGK 1976), which had still argued that separation into nations was the natural order of humanity. Church and Society rejected the methods of biblical exegesis that had previously been used, and the conclusions it resulted in. The means of theologically justifying segregation will be elaborated below.

A book can be understood differently by its readers who bring a multitude of backgrounds and experiences to its textual interpretation. The bible is a written text, understood to be divinely inspired, and thus expressing an unchanging truth and moral system. The existence of differing Christian moralities means that a variety of behavioural guidelines can be understood from the one source. God may be the ultimate arbiter, but God's will is required to be enacted by people. The fact that Orania has many different types of Christianity and different moralities illustrates that the bible is interpreted in enough ways to suit people's inclinations. However, the core message must be assumed to remain the same. Roy Rappaport indicates this when he explains that it is religion which provides the stability which grounds the fluctuations of the real world.

Mundane activities are intrinsically ambiguous, and the events which they form or to which they respond are continuously lost to an irretrievable past. In contrast, liturgical acts repeatedly recover the eternal which, being nothing if not immutable, is intrinsically true, and thus moral and even proper. The enactments of time out of time may account for or explain the origins and states of historical events and processes, and thus provide grounds for understandings of them, but they are not themselves of history. Indeed, they stand against history and may even propose standards in whose terms the events of history are to be judged (Rappaport 1999:234)

The infallibility of the bible as the source of morals, goals and purposes implies a few things. The bible, both as a text and as a matter of doctrine does not change. It is people who change things, although God is considered the ultimate cause. But for the bible to remain true, which it must by doctrinal definition, then change can only actually be superficial. Change can only be perceived change, or interpretation. Whether through stability of the text or other means, there is an assumption that

continuity is at the core of sociality, since if something is genuinely true then it does not change.

The churches in Orania represent different approaches to Orania and its place in South Africa and human history: social and racial exclusion, openness to new ideas, methods of worship and behaviour. This means that whilst all the churches might have the main principles of Protestant Christianity in common, they differ on the issues relating to the positioning of people in relation to God and the universe, and the place that Afrikaners have in relation to other people and to God. Although they talk about being fundamentally the same, since ultimately they were serving the same God, each thinks he or she is right. Sometimes that involves trying to ensure others comply with their expectations, sometimes people are happy to accept or accommodate difference if it means ultimately, they can get along. For example, Ebert was philosophical, saying that ultimately everybody has to account for their views to God. This makes religion another facet of the town's identity conflicts; adherence to the one creed binds them, yet the differences between them can assume great importance in practice.

The Israelite theology is perhaps most explicitly involved in defining the relationship between self and other, or even, arguably, based on that. By taking the view that only people descended from the Israelites, understood to be those of European descent, are able to gain entry to heaven, all others are removed from the moral community.

### **WHAT COLOUR MEANS, AND AXES FOR SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION**

Concepts relating to the classification of people, those of race, ethnicity, culture and class, have meant quite different things since the beginning of European settlement at the Cape. What might constitute racism and the reasons for it in the early days, and in the twentieth century, and now, are different.

In the days of VOC rule, slaves who became Christians were freed. Although they were not always considered social equals by European settlers, they were equals before the law. The segregation in the early years at the Cape was never formal policy, and was more accurately class discrimination because it “never fully coincided with colour. The division ran along the lines of civilisation and education



as it did in almost all colonial territories. There was what one might call a ‘natural’ segregation which is not to be confused with apartheid” (Kinghorn 1990:58).

Kinghorn explains that the segregation in existence before the twentieth century is often attributed to the influence of Calvinist theology propagated by the NGK. Yet from the South African church becoming its own synod in 1824 until 1857 the church maintained that there could only be one church for all people. However, Kinghorn points out, within congregations parishioners began to favour separation of services or even buildings. Since the African church members were all first generation converts, differences in language, culture and comportment were compounded by recent converts being unfamiliar with church traditions (ibid.). In 1857 the synod agreed that services for blacks could be held in different buildings as a concession to ‘the weak’ in congregations whose opposition to black fellow-parishioners hindered the propagation of Christianity among blacks (ibid.). However, by 1881 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (NGSK) was established to coordinate the separated black congregations.

After the passing of many decades, this concession to the weakness of the few, for whom separate congregations were established, became entrenched as ‘tradition’. What started out with no theological justification became tradition, and that tradition then required a theological substantiation. Social and political pressure influenced the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) to provide a moral and theological justification for the separation of ethnic or national groups.

In the early twentieth century the ‘race problem’ referred to the conflict between English-speakers and Afrikaners, indicating that race was not about colour but about social or perceived cultural incommensurability (Kinghorn 1986b:53; Nederveen Pieterse 1992:104). Johan Kinghorn argues that the existing ‘traditional’ segregation, based on differences between cultural groups, became solidified with the influence of biological theories of race in the 1930s (see also Dubow 1992).

#### EXPRESSIONS OF RACIAL PREJUDICE/DELINEATION

While in Orania there were occasionally comments expressing prejudice against people who were not Afrikaners, not white, or in other ways different, there were only a few times when I heard claims about difference being based on biology. One

of these accounts was from a man who said he had heard it several decades before from a doctor who conducted autopsies. The doctor claimed that there were significant differences in the brain structure and function between white and black people, and that there were particular problems which relate to people of mixed origins, for example that they cannot see in three dimensions. This man explained that the doctor was forced by the authorities, who at the time were moving towards equality, to stay silent about what he knew to be true. Both this and the claim of another man that black people are unable to plan ahead, which accounted for the shortcomings of present-day municipal councils, are very old stereotypes. The first story also intersects with ideas about conspiracies to explain perceived disjunctures between observed and hidden processes.

Whilst some people hold such views, recounting only these examples obscure the nuances that are to be found in views about race. Sometimes the use of certain derogatory terminology indicates people's views, as some will and some will not use such language. Yet this is not always a suitable indicator of what people's views are. Avoidance could mean simply avoidance of an offensive word, rather than holding socially liberal views. For some, especially for older people in whose lifetimes terminology has changed from being descriptive to being viewed as offensive, terminology can be a matter of habit rather than offense. The young minister of the GvdV recounted a story, using the word *kaffirtjies* in passing. I was alarmed at the casual use of this racist term, considered highly offensive to most South Africans. When I asked some members of the congregation about this, I was told that *kaffirs* just means *heidene* (heathens) – which, for Israelites, black people are by definition – so it is technically accurate. The term originates from the Arabic word for heathen. I was told that it was a *doodgewone woord* (completely ordinary word) – even if one that they are careful to not use in 'liberal' company. For young people in Orania it may be an indicator of their upbringing and they may not be aware of the connotations of racist terminology in the South African history. Some people in turn are very vocal against or sensitive towards racism. Ludwig once told a guest who argued that F.W. de Klerk was a traitor for having handed the country over to the *kaffirs* not to use that language in his presence; and in any case, what choice did De Klerk have? Negotiating a peaceful transition was the means of avoiding a civil war.

Orania represents a cross-section of views found among other Afrikaners and South Africans from the politically conservative end of the spectrum, because that is who they are. The adults have come from outside, and the children have different experiences but reflect or respond to their environment in various ways.

#### THE INTERPRETATION OF VISIBLE SIGNS

Interestingly, Ludwig argued that rather than racism, the resentment of white against black is actually xenophobia. Prejudice based on visible signs often correlates with unfamiliarity, where the fear of the unknown is expressed as aversion. The more information available about other people, the more comprehensible they are. I once heard a comment about there being an increasing number of Somalis moving to Kimberley. Somebody asked how to identify Somalis, although since there was not yet any particular connotation for what being Somali might mean, it was for the sake or recognition, and not immediately negative.

Ethnocentrism in Orania is complex, and whilst it was expressed through sometimes petty notions, it does not necessarily mean being fearful of all things different: I attended a Turkish-themed surprise seventieth birthday party for Ouma Rienie. There was mulled wine, curry and even baklava, a brave attempt in a town where sourcing ingredients is nigh impossible. All the ladies present were dressed in their interpretations of exotic outfits – it seems unlikely that a collection of ladies with headscarves had previously been seen on the main street of Orania. Yet along with her family, Ouma Rienie followed biblical proscriptions on food, and once asked a butcher, presumably in Kimberley, if some sausages contained pork. He replied that they did not, they were halal. Since she was aware that halal was something Muslim, she declined to buy them. Although by my understanding this meant it complied with Old Testament laws, Johan explained that it was to be avoided because it meant it was dedicated to an idol.

Wynand said that he had operated a sausage stand in Marabastad in Pretoria in his youth. He had had no difficulties whatsoever, and had on some occasions found himself lost. Whilst Pieter, an *uitwoner* and investor from Johannesburg, considered that admitting you did not know where you were in the form of asking for directions was dangerous, Wynand said he had never found people anything other

than helpful. I recounted a story of getting a minibus taxi in Pretoria where, unlike Cape Town, the destinations of the taxis are not written on the front of the minibuses, meaning that some knowledge of routes or inquiry is required to use them. To my embarrassment, the whole taxi full of commuters seemed very concerned that I should get off at the right place and get home safely. Pieter thought that this had been a very risky action for me to have taken, that I was lucky to have kept all my possessions as well as my life, and that the passengers were perhaps keen to remove me from the taxi because I was so out of place that I could only have been a trap or something to be held in suspicion. To him, black people were a violent threat, which meant that interaction should be avoided, which in turn meant that he did not learn much about his fellow South Africans through personal experience. This is common to many people in Orania and around South Africa, and people's views on race, their fears about security and their reasons for coming to Orania were often intertwined.

There was only one person who bluntly told me he was racist – and that during an evening's *braaiing* (barbecuing) and drinking, so the declaration may not be entirely reliable. Yet intriguingly, on other occasions, his descriptions of the conflicts between the various African groups and the cultural differences between them, and his descriptions of how he treated his coloured farm workers, begin to suggest something that is not quite racial hatred. He told me with enthusiasm about how he was paying for the education of his workers' children, one of whom was studying fashion design. This was decidedly not an area in which there could be instrumental benefit for a grain farmer. He told me that he would not consider firing people who had worked for him for 25 years in order to employ a less skilled or experienced white person, in order to be in line with Orania's policy. He did in effect adopt *selfwerksaamheid* through mechanisation, because that means less people are required to do the same amount of work. The structures may be hierarchical with skin colour marking boundaries, but it is not an example of racial discrimination or hatred.

Depending on their backgrounds, people who lived in Orania had different experiences and levels of sympathy with and understanding of non-Afrikaners. Being able to understand the languages that other people speak and to read and understand

their non-verbal signs, provides the social fluency and mobility that can be useful for navigating such a multicultural society as South Africa.

Christiaan van Zyl, the architect, said that he had grown up on a farm in the former Transvaal. In that environment he grew up alongside and entirely familiar with Africans, although he was sorry that he could not speak any African languages. Wynand explained that his father, Prof Carel, spoke Tswana as well as he spoke Afrikaans. He said that white people speaking African languages was partly a generational phenomenon, particularly among those who grew up in the rural areas. Before Afrikaner nationalism became the dominant political outlook, and before widespread school attendance for Africans, it was easier for white people to learn the language that most of the people in the area spoke, rather than expecting them to speak a minority language like Afrikaans or English. This linguistic fluency means that where Wynand could be unsure in a situation because people around him are speaking a language he cannot understand, his father could be entirely at ease because he could understand people. Many of the people in Orania could speak other African languages.

Despite her disapproval of anything that might be racist, Ursula Malherbe said that they were wary of the temporary workers they hired for harvesting and shearing. Neither they nor their regular workers could understand the language the temporary workers spoke, making it difficult to assess their trustworthiness. The context for this was the first few attacks on farms in the region, which had made them a bit more anxious.

In discussing the farm workers who had apparently despatched the AWB leader Eugene Terre'Blanche, Karin said that if those workers had only been on the farm for a short time, then they were not *plaaswerkers* (farm workers) in the true sense of the term. The workers on the farm when she had grown up had been working there for several generations, as had her family. When her father spoke to African people on the phone, they called him 'brother', and on meeting him in person, were astonished to find that he was white. Karin had spoken Sotho herself when she was younger, though had not spoken it for many years.

Whilst there is a general view in South Africa of cities being more liberal and cosmopolitan through increased interactions across ethnic lines, there seems to also

be evidence for the opposite being true due to the nature of the interactions. Even if farms run by white people with black workers can be feudal in structure, the interactions can be those of people who work together and have grown up together – who are dependent on each other. On the other hand, if interactions in cities are frequent but limited in depth, this could lead to quite a different outlook and understanding of ‘race relations’. There is no definite correlation between the nature and degree of interactions and openness, but the above examples demonstrate that the relationship between definitions, interactions, and the ability to relate to specific others is complex. Johann Kriel said that even during the height of apartheid there was probably less racism in the remote parts of the Free State than in the cities due to everyday interdependence. Robert Thornton, in a historical analysis of why the positioning of groups in South Africa is far from binary, and using KwaZulu and Natal as an example, concludes that in “a complexly interwoven landscape of Zulus and whites, the emergence of absolute categorical racism that fully excluded the participation of each in the other’s politics never emerged” (Thornton 1995:213).

Some of the occupations in and around Orania involve more interaction with people from outside the town. The people in these jobs seem to have good relationships with their non-white customers, clients or employees. From this, one could suppose that interaction and familiarity leads to a more open outlook, yet some of these people are able to carry on friendly relationships whilst holding theologically exclusionary views. Others are uncomfortable with proximity to non-white people, yet their religious views are that all people are equal. This makes a disjuncture between what they profess and how they behave, with some people showing courtesy or gratitude to people whose humanity they do not recognise. Others who held strong negative views towards ‘the English’ insisted on speaking English with me as a matter of courtesy, even when I could speak Afrikaans.

The boundary between black and white is differently constituted from that between Afrikaans and English because there is no threat of confusion between black Africans and Afrikaners. Whilst average Oraniërs do not consider that they have much in common with black South Africans, some among them imagine they share an understanding of group identity and nationalism in a way that, for example, English-speaking whites do not. The fact of black people being the largest part of the

population meant that fears about Afrikaners being so outnumbered were generally placed on them, as were fears relating to crime and corruption.

Once, in the course of a conversation with Annatjie Joubert, she said people were not being open with me. I said that I had had some very frank conversations with people, and people did not seem to avoid talking openly in front of me. No, she told me, they were certainly not being entirely honest in front of me. She asked whether I had heard about the man from the Reserve Bank. Orania's bank, the Orania Savings and Credit Co-operative was being reviewed to be upgraded to a Co-operative Bank, which required a visit from an official from the South African Reserve Bank. He was to stay overnight, but the first few guesthouses that were approached on his behalf refused to accept a black guest. Annatjie was shocked, and said that although some might say they do not accept *volksvreemdes* (non-Afrikaners), this was a principle that was not applied when a guest or patron was white, such as a recent Scottish visitor who had come to study natural medicine. Annatjie was embarrassed about the blatant inconsistency, which meant that *volkseie* (people's own) was circumvented when people were white. I said that I had heard that there were people or businesses unwilling to serve some guests/patrons on account of their skin colour. The *dorpsraad* (town council) took the view that if discrimination was their personal inclination then hospitality was not the right industry for them to be in. However, some amongst the *dorpsraad* members were themselves not entirely unsympathetic to those inclinations. Some catered to the visits of black government officials to the town by arranging private meals with the group who are being visited so as to avoid the awkwardness of hosting guests in public.

Physical appearance, including skin colour, is still a salient social marker in South Africa, as a way of identifying oneself, and of reading other people. These external signs may be read and understood in relation to one's perspective. One afternoon in Pretoria I was walking to the shops. A black man approached me and asked for money, instead of asking any of the other passersby who were black. A few blocks later, a white man asked me, instead of any of the other black pedestrians, for directions. The fact of my having white skin and being in Pretoria, was read by one man as indicating having some money I might give him, and by the other, that I was

Afrikaans-speaking. Skin colour is perceived as an indicator of whether someone is intelligible to you, however flawed its accuracy.

For all the emphasis on race and its very external nature, it is also not a straightforward way of identifying people. Whilst people in Orania may be considered white, this is not a clear matter of the shade of their skin. There is no value placed on having pale coloured skin, in fact it could be considered unhealthy. Some people, whether through years of outdoor work or other factors, have quite dark coloured skin. One young woman even laughed at the fact that all that stood between her being Afrikaans in Orania and passing for coloured in Hopetown was a difference in hair style. But for all the scope for questioning people's heritage, I never heard of this being done, and this seems rather curious. It seems that collectively, Afrikaners are a racial group, but on an individual level there is some flexibility. Also, anyone laying such allegations against others must be certain of his or her own background. This is a matter where researching one's ancestry carries the risk of finding out that one of the many Khoikhoi, or African, Indian or Malay slaves who intermarried with Europeans in the early years at the Cape, was indeed an ancestor (see Heese 1984). Most people acknowledge that some Afrikaners have some non-European ancestors, but for those who regard this as problematic, it is safer to assume that they are other people's ancestors.

### **AFRIKANER SOCIAL COSMOLOGY**

The research of Johann Kinghorn during his time as a biblical studies scholar at the University of Stellenbosch provides a model of the internal logic of Afrikanerdom. By questioning the view that the former Afrikaner establishment presented to the outside and instead positing an interpretation of the self-conception of Afrikaner unity, Kinghorn avoids focusing on the crudities of political discourse and provides a cosmological theory, which is also useful for understanding Orania's logic of national separatism. Kinghorn does this by focusing on the internal debates and documents of the NGK, which are more complex and nuanced than the popular justifications. This means that he extrapolates a model of how Afrikaners see their place in the cosmos rather than how they explain themselves to others.



Religion implies interpreting the particular with respect to the universal, and this means connecting the everyday with ultimate purposes and the coherent order of things. This means that the form which the latter takes is the framework from which individuals shape themselves and their society. "Society needs a sense – expressed as a set of values – of its coherence. But this coherence is only existentially credible if it is understood as correlative to the all-encompassing coherence of being" (Kinghorn 1994:395, see also Dumont 1980:260). Kinghorn then goes on to note that this is why creation stories are both almost universal and of supreme significance in religions, as the laying out of precisely this fundamental and necessary order and meaning (1994:396). Origin myths

stipulate and indicate that environment which is considered to be the prerequisite for the existence of humanity. They tell us how the world is put together, from which human beings can infer the contours according to which they conduct their lives. Telling a creation story means graphically setting the parameters of the structural limits of being, governing all human actions and relations. Beyond such limits no human existence is possible (ibid.:397).

Thus it follows that society must conform to this outline or must be made to. But more than being a prescription, as a claim on the origins of all, it forms the substance of the way individuals understand themselves in the greater temporal, spatial and existential cosmos.

Kinghorn explains how the logic of this social ordering unfolded, but how it was applied in the twentieth century was built upon its earlier development. Jonathan Neil Gerstner (1991) historically examines the way in which Reformed theology from the Netherlands was understood and applied in the South African colony. Gerstner explains how one of the origins of South Africa's social divisions lies in aspects of Reformed theology that relate to the children of believers. It is a belief peculiar to the Reformed tradition of the seventeenth century, that the children of Christians can be considered Christians themselves prior to baptism.

A Lutheran (or a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox for that matter) could not say his child was born a Christian. The child is born in sin and will remain that way until he is baptized. For the Baptist, the child is not a Christian until he believes. The only branch of Christianity which could affirm that a child is born a Christian is the Reformed (ibid.:245).

From this perspective, Christianity is innate to those of Christian parentage, where even sinful behaviour does not disqualify a person from being regarded as a Christian (Gerstner 1991:245). It is through a distortion of Reformed theology that Christianity can be viewed as a birth right for those of Christian parentage but not for others (ibid.:253-256). For those of heathen parentage conversion is possible – tellingly – by means of enculturation and education, but even within this framework differences in nature are immutable. This theological interpretation alongside the economic context where labourers were slaves or Khoi Khoi, and thus distinguishable by appearance, helped to instantiate class stratification by colour. Although the Company baptised its slaves’ children, indicating that they would be guaranteed a Christian upbringing, the belief in the innateness of redemption for the children of Christians meant that the baptised children of slaves were “set apart for God” but still had to prove themselves. “The humanitarian motive in baptizing the company slaves in no way eliminated the great spiritual gap between the two groups” (ibid.:249). Gerstner argues that being Christian was a position with accordant social privileges, meaning that converting slaves and Khoi Khoi involved inviting them to be social equals (ibid.:252-3). Those of European origin were initially set apart from others by inheriting their Christianity through the covenant.

Kinghorn explains that the most often cited Afrikaner founding myth, that of the covenant made at Blood River, although providing a bond amongst Afrikaners, was not cited in theological arguments to support apartheid. What features, he argues, is, in place of the creation story at the beginning of Genesis, the story of the tower of Babel (1994:398-401). Although nothing was created in the story, an order was established (ibid.:400). This ordering was read as supporting the view that people are divided into nations, unintelligible to each other through the medium of different languages (ibid.:399). According to this view, identity is created and maintained through lineages and families, which are themselves also bounded by linguistic comprehension (ibid.:401). It is precisely this inward-looking isolation that must help to maintain the self against the outside, sticking with those whom one understands and can easily communicate with. But through reading this experience in the Bible and hence as a universal, the same should apply to all groups, that

ultimately they cannot understand each other. People created the tower of Babel, and God dispersed them.

The idea that nations are meant to be separate means that the foundational idea of apartheid can be found in the bible, making it seem part of universal framework (Kinghorn 1994:399). If it is universal, it is not a matter of right or wrong: “Reference to Babel served to elevate the policies of separation beyond the grasp of moral debate... [which] only applies to situations where options are available.” (ibid.:400).

According to Roy Rappaport, one of the implications of language is the potential to lie, and the potential to conceive of alternatives. If it can be said that something is one way, then grammatical form allows it to be said that something is not that way, or that it is another way (1999:11-18). The consequences of capacity for lying means that it is not only the reliability of particular truths which is at stake, but the credibility of consociates is never certain: it is based on a relationship of trust. “The survival of any population... depends upon social interactions characterized by some minimum degree of orderliness, but orderliness in social systems depends, in turn, upon communication which must meet some minimum standard of reliability if the recipients of messages are to be willing to accept the information they receive as sufficiently reliable to depend upon” (ibid.:15). Building an ordered society means people must be able to comprehend each other and trust each other. This requires establishing the terms on which that order and trust rest. In the case of Afrikaners, and arguably other groups in South Africa and elsewhere, this rests on the premise that people of different groups are ultimately incommensurable with each other, that societies are bounded by mutual comprehensibility – in which case multicultural societies are effectively tautological.

Although the problem of certainty may have become increasingly serious, problematic and even desperate as humanity has evolved socially and culturally, I take it to be *intrinsic to the human condition*, that is, the condition of a species that lives, and can only live, by meanings and understandings it itself must construct in a world devoid of intrinsic meaning but subject to causal laws, not all of which are known. It is, further, a world in which the lie is ubiquitous, and in which the ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ of key elements, like gods and values and social orders, not only have to be invented but maintained in the face of increasing threats, posed by ever-burgeoning alternative possibilities, to falsify them. If the

world is to have any words at all it may be necessary to establish *The Word* – the *True Word* – to stand against the dissolvent power of lying words and many words, to stand against falsehood and Babel (Rappaport 1999:21).

Afrikaners have an intuitive or natural reluctance towards non-whites which is not justifiable using a standard account of Christianity.

#### HOW THE THEOLOGY OF SEPARATION CAME ABOUT

The NGK's establishment of separate services for black church members who were mostly new converts in 1857 was a concession to the 'weak' church members, and the formalisation of these through the establishment of the sub-structure of the mission church in 1881 was a matter of organisation rather than ideology (Kinghorn 1990:58). Kinghorn traces a moment of potential liberalisation of the church in the 1920s, but explains that this was quickly overridden by the radicalisation of the Afrikaans population (ibid.:60-63). In the face of their poverty and uncompetitiveness during the Great Depression, they became receptive to the racial nationalism that was prevalent in Europe at the time. A 'traditional' fear guided policy because there was foremost an obligation towards other Afrikaners who required support (Kinghorn 1986c:88). The creation of separate churches, which was initially in concession to illiberal whites, could after seventy years be used to justify separation as tradition. If, by this point, the separation of black and white congregations could be justified in terms of tradition, effort must be put into theological justification. The alternative would be to imply that the church had been sinning by segregating, at a point when this segregation was seen as desirable and the vulnerable Afrikaans public were pushing for its expansion into other areas of social life. The paradox of the justification of cumulative action means that "[t]o deny the propriety of the step he is about to take is to undercut the propriety of the step he just took, and this undercuts the subject's own moral position. The subject is trapped by his gradual commitment" (Sabini & Silver cited in Bauman 1989:158). By the time the church had been practicing segregation for many decades it was impossible to stop the practice without condemning themselves.

Since all people are equal before God, and indeed, this is a presumption of the missionary work carried out by the church, this "makes the logic of racism

fundamentally suspect” (Kinghorn 1990:65). To bridge these two problems, a new conceptualisation of social ethics was developed:

all people were equal, not as individuals, but within the confines of their particular nationhood. All nations were also equal – at least in principle, if not at the level of their cultural development. Exactly for this reason a God-given responsibility rested on the more developed to ensure the development of the less developed – without violating their individuality and dignity (ibid.:66).

People must be considered equal, but given group differences, it can be understood that *peoples* are equal, that is, individuals belong to groups, and these groups are equal. Instead of viewing *volke* as horizontal strata with a hierarchy, *volke* were conceived of vertically, that is, distinct but not hierarchical. Viewing society as horizontally stratified would, the church understood, be oppression, but by understanding groups as being in parallel it involves wishing for others what you wish for yourself, and this the church did through charitable activities and also by having the ear of the government to promote the interests of all groups of South Africans (Kinghorn 1986c:97). Although earlier ideas about the equality of all Christians were overridden by this theological substantiation of racial prejudice and the romantic nationalist *volk* concept of nations as discrete units, in practice this difference in stratification was used as an opportunity for paternalistic charity rather than denying others’ humanity (ibid.:96).

In 1947 the church took the view that growth of faith was analogous to the growth of an individual, where the ‘planting of the seed’ of faith enabled the individual to realise other aspects of their potential (ibid.:93). This was considered also true at the level of nations: evangelisation was the means for development, a seed that would grow once planted, but that also meant that those societies which had been long Christianised were at a different stage of development than those which had only recently become Christian. In this respect the different groups of European origin in South Africa were alike in belonging to an old Christian tradition, and the different African groups shared a new Christianity. Being a gradual process of spiritual development, too much contact between those at different stages would be detrimental to both, with those at the later stages regressing while those at the earlier stages can only progress in their culturally specific manner and appropriate pace by

avoiding external cultural interference (Kingshorn 1986c:94). Curiously, this notion of history as an unfolding, a process tending towards a predetermined end is also the way Herder imagined historical causality (Barnard 1965:53), and he also used the development of an organism as a metaphor. Apartheid was the actualisation of an idea about how the world works:

This all means nothing less than that apartheid is, at its most fundamental, a *self-understanding*. Apartheid is a life institution of the recognition of the difference in ranking order of peoples and the willingness to live in accordance with that. Those who live out the self-understanding that is apartheid will therefore not find legislation discriminating. The precondition for that is a genuine faith, because only through a true religious faith can a person gain the knowledge to understand the discrepancies in stages as the natural unfolding of the germ of the gospel (Kingshorn 1986c:95).<sup>3</sup>

In this way, segregation in South Africa could be viewed not merely as racism, but as a matter of necessary and moral social ordering. Fulfilling their Christian duty to assist the less privileged in order to promote equality between the groups, and maintaining the integrity of nations by ensuring this development is in accordance with the culture of each nation. Thus, nationalism, with its inclination towards racism by placing one nation above others, could be reinterpreted as nations being created in parallel. A romantic nationalist concept of the *volk* was necessary in enabling the history of the Afrikaner *volk* to be considered as being in alignment with scripture, as was a peculiar form of biblical exegesis: the past can be used as a guide for the future because the past is by definition an expression of God's will, although this was taken as obvious before the way in which apartheid aligned with scripture was laid out (ibid.:89-90). This is not to say the interpretation was not disputed, even from within. As early as 1949 a theologian argued that if Africans were backwards, it was the fault of the white people for exploiting them, and that if whites were afraid, it was only due to the consequences of their own self-serving actions (ibid.:98).

Such an image presents the ideal-type of separate development, as envisaged by those who helped formulate the ideology and theology of it: a kind of cultural relativism with its foundation in romantic nationalism. Race is hiding within nation,

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<sup>3</sup> My translation

but still there, making it incongruous but technically precise to decry racism whilst supporting apartheid (Kinghorn 1990:67-8).

In a similar vein, in the present day, those with a more exclusivist perspective who understand equality as being uniformity, argue that equality is instituted by people, but it is incorrect as God does not intend for all people to be equal. When I asked about what the story of the tower of Babel meant, with Kinghorn's theory in mind, André Coetsee said that it was correct that nations were created by God. He complained about the misconception that the story of the Garden of Eden was about an apple. Rather, it reflected the inevitability of conflict between God's chosen ones and those who were not chosen, and the fact that Satan could not accept that some were chosen rather than all being equal, and that he was not in charge. Gerstner's interpretation of the resistance to equality of two centuries ago is echoed in André's view.

Opposition to 'gelykstelling' was thus not primarily an excuse for abusing slaves and servants. Rather it was an attitude of desperately striving to maintain a feeling of superiority to those inhabitants round about. Christianity was the one clear item of cultural worth in a society viewed almost universally by Europeans as degenerating to the point of being dangerously similar to their African neighbors. ... The Christians must receive a dignity in treatment which heathen do not receive. Any attempt to treat the two groups equally opposes God who made the distinction (Gerstner 1991:255).

### **KEEPING ORDER**

Despite the apparent significance of the story of Babel to an Afrikaner cosmology, I never heard the story told in Orania. As Kinghorn points out, the story is not a part of the popular narrative, but important in the theological justification of the social order. Also, Kinghorn's study is based on the papers of the NGK, which is not the dominant church in Orania, nor was it the only church whose theological interpretation helped people to support apartheid. Yet the relationship between this type of argument for the separation of nations and the understanding of nations which is based on German romantic nationalism is by no means limited to that church at that time. There is a difficulty in assuming that this logic still prevails amongst Afrikaners, but at least it would provide an explanation for the variety and yet the sense of unity among

Afrikaners. They may not constitute an ideal-type *volk* of the kind they imagine, but being an Afrikaner is still a salient identity. The shifting of some aspects of Afrikaans culture is accepted, but this evolution is still not considered to change the essence that is at the heart of a nation.

Many of the apparent inconsistencies through the history of apartheid, about why such a vast project of social engineering was even attempted, make sense in light of Kinghorn's argument. Only a cosmological motivation, rather than a practical or economic one, could make such a plan desirable to its instigators and the electorate, even while it was unclear how such an undertaking could be implemented. It is not the fact of the difference or interactions with people who are different that is problematic, but that maintaining the boundary between the groups is of utmost importance. Of course, this notion evokes Mary Douglas's point about there being nothing inherent in what is viewed as dirty or clean, ordered or disordered:

In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our dirt-avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience (Douglas 1966:2).

The categorisation of people was and is a cosmological purpose prior to being a bureaucratic one. Even so, the system of social categories is not undermined by the crossing of boundaries: transgression cannot question the system if it is punished with social censure. But in Orania, the nature of these relationships to other groups is under constant negotiation. Even if Orania is a place where people are aware of their skin colour in relation to the rest of the country, the nuances of this relationship vary in relation to which group, what the nature of the interaction is, and where it takes place. Sometimes the relationship is a dualistic one of 'us' and 'them', and other times knowledge of varied groups, differences and interrelationships, are taken into account. But the thing that remains is this idea of separate groups.

One of the intentions of Orania is to have an environment where religious belief is not separated from everyday activity, sectioned into designated areas of social life, but forms its foundation. But in the practice of this, differences of opinion emerge and manifest themselves in the proliferation of church denominations. The differences between these churches are sometimes historical, or relate to worship



style, or due to interpersonal conflict, family and other social divisions. These form nominal groups but not always coherent units of agreement, as there can be as much difference of opinion within groups as between them and others. However, I argue that these approximately ten different groupings can be sorted into three: the Reformed, the Evangelical and the Israelite. Broadly speaking, these groupings reflect different ways of defining Afrikaners and people who can be considered like them, and different attitudes towards groups of non-Afrikaners. This implies that relationships to others that vary between occasions and contexts also vary between people and churches. Furthermore, theological conservatism does not necessarily imply closed-mindedness, and theological equality does not always mean open-mindedness.

It is to this point that we can add Johann Kinghorn's argument that a conception of nations as being discrete but in a relationship of parallel equality with each other is fundamental to an Afrikaner conception of the world. What this means for Orania is that although the many different churches offer a variety of ways of situating people in respect to the social world, at a fundamental level it is possible for them to share a cosmological view. Where Garriott and O'Neill (2008) argue that both Christians and anthropologists of Christianity share the concern of the indeterminacy of who can actually be described as a Christian given the variety of views, practices and approaches, Kinghorn's theory explains how, despite Oraniërs sometimes rejecting each others' forms of Christianity, at a fundamental level they could share the same perspective. Even though they effectively take for granted that Afrikaners will disagree with each other, this does not override the premise of concerted group action, that ultimately they are alike and want the same things. The worldview that they share comprises being only ultimately able to rely on each other. They may disagree, but unlike with the rest of South Africa, they are at least having the same conversation.

For all the differences that arise within Orania, they share a belief in the *volk* and their somewhat divided efforts are about maintaining the coherence of the group. The next chapter will continue with discussion of the nature and fluidity of boundaries, in relation to the raising and enculturation of children.



## V: EDUCATING FOR WHICH FUTURE?

One of the things that unites Oraniërs is their belief that the *volk* is a holistic unit who ultimately share understandings, concerns, a past, and must therefore work together to secure a future. The *volk* concept underlies self-determination and its associated labour practices, and is central to religion and understandings of social order, and enculturation and interpretations of history. It ties together a common sense folk understanding of the world, political strategy, and a social scientific understanding of the world. The *volk* cosmology sits at the heart of religion and shapes the way the world is understood. On account of this, being a member of a *volk* is a matter of the essence of a person's identity.

If group membership is considered inherent to a person, and if clarity of group boundaries is vital, it becomes all the more important how children are enculturated. If cultures operate through social institutions, then those institutions must provide a reliable means of raising children in a certain unambiguous mould. Jonathan Neil Gerstner describes attempts at conversion of the Khoi in the early years at the Cape through raising Khoi children within the households of settlers. He indicates that "[b]ringing the non-Christian into the home and a Christian environment seemed the natural way to attempt his conversion. This is a particularly Dutch Reformed method, which reflects the depth of emphasis on the Christian family as the center of the covenant" (Gerstner 1991:247). Whilst bringing up non-whites to become Christians occurred in the early years, the development of 'natural' segregation reinforced an unwillingness to absorb non-whites into white society.

Views on which boundaries are permeable and which are not have changed over the centuries and were supported by theological reinterpretations in the twentieth century. In the present, the argument around Afrikaans language education has the same basis, namely, definition of group boundaries through enculturation. Although Afrikaners as a group are defined by descent, their European origins meaning they have white skin, within the realm of common phenotype a social definition prevails and people can assimilate themselves into or out of the group. Being regarded from both inside and outside as an ethnic or cultural group, the limitations are not infinitely flexible. For people in Orania, the potential for nurture

to create a certain type of person is dependent on nature, but nature must be supplemented by nurture for people to belong to a *volk*. Nurture cannot override nature, but is required to substantiate it.

Before discussing the raising of children so that they become Afrikaners, it is useful to further examine notions about the *volk* and how the Afrikaans group is constituted by looking at where traits of Afrikaners intersect with those of other groups.

### **AFRIKANERS IN RELATION TO CULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL NEIGHBOURS**

The Russells provide a way of defining Afrikaners of Ghanzi, Botswana, by necessary and additional traits: Afrikaans language, white Caucasian appearance, European descent and Reformed religion do not alone determine group membership, but together they do. Additionally, there are “cultural features, including distinctive patterns of diet, subsistence, kinship and recreation, which are recognised as transient: absence of these features cannot disqualify one from group membership, but their display will signal possible group membership” (Russell & Russell 1979:67). In contrast, the most general definition in Orania would include Caucasian descent and Afrikaans as a first language. Not all people belong to a Reformed denomination, although all are expected to be Christian, not all speak Afrikaans at home, although they are expected to do so in public, and not all are of unequivocally western European appearance. Furthermore, although Orania may be a community defined in cultural terms, it allows for individual variations in biography and acknowledges that sustaining the settlement requires creativity. We can infer from this that an Oraniër does not have to be a *regte* (proper) Afrikaner, it is an identity that is chosen. One of Orania’s residents, Sebastiaan Biehl, was born and brought up in Germany but emigrated to South Africa due to feeling an affinity with Afrikaners. The Russells continue,

Although ethnic groups cannot be culturally defined, since ethnic identities outlive changing cultural patterns (Barth 1969:4-9), the closeness or looseness of the fit between group and culture is itself of interest. The looseness of fit suggests the intrinsic irrelevance of particular cultural features, though their simultaneous presentation tends to constitute identity. Each particular cultural feature shared with a

neighbouring ethnic group represents, positively, a basis for interaction and shared interests, and negatively, a threat of assimilation (Russell & Russell 1979:67).

The traits which describe Afrikaners are also partly shared with coloured and English-speaking South Africans, thus, “[t]he greater the likelihood of assimilation, the greater the need for emphatic dissociation” (ibid.:69). The boundaries which define Afrikaners are permeable, which can threaten the integrity of the numerically vulnerable group, since they can easily adapt to other groups and lose their characteristic traits. Yet on the other hand, a minority needs boundaries to remain permeable because they need to be able to assimilate people in to boost their numbers, and to gain political support from people with whom they share traits. This intelligibility across boundaries can be seen as both an asset and a threat, so that where the boundary is and the necessity of enforcing it is a matter of debate.

Thomas Eriksen suggests that “ethnic folk taxonomies are at their most detailed closest to the actor” (2002:27), but this would imply that the means for identifying who is within or outside of the group would be more precise. Given the importance of being able to identify who is assimilable or like oneself, it is surprising that taxonomies, which may be detailed in some respects, are also sometimes conflated. The conflation of English-speakers, English people and English-speaking South Africans by using the same term obscures important differences in the political position of each in relation to Afrikaners. In addition to this, Oraniërs could talk about black people whilst meaning non-white South Africans in general or Africans in particular. In the Northern Cape most of the population is coloured, so black in the local context either refers to a small group or is used to mean non-whites, or it could refer to non-white South Africans as a whole, most of whom are black. This choice of word could also be an artefact of Oraniërs being from the less ethnically diverse parts and more socially divided parts of South Africa. Nevertheless, it is strange that people would not always bother to acknowledge that these could be important distinctions. Sometimes their categorisations are precise, sometimes they divide into us and them.

Afrikaners and coloureds share the Afrikaans language, and share cultural aspects and food. The groups consider themselves different, but the risk of blurring is there. Despite its unreliability, skin colour is the main way of identifying this

difference. There were those in the town who considered that it was both necessary and desirable to form an alliance with coloured organisations, as they were geographically, linguistically and culturally neighbours. Yet even those who had no inhibitions about interactions with coloureds, did not necessarily advocate their acceptance in Orania. The reasoning was that whilst English-speaking people could move to Orania, and their children would be Afrikaans as a result of their upbringing, whereas the children of coloured people would always be considered coloured by others in the town. It would not matter to many, but to some it would matter, and not being accepted by some as a member of the community would not be the right environment for children to be brought up. For those who did not think Orania should be exclusively for ethnic Afrikaners, the only reason for not encouraging coloured people to settle in Orania was how they would be treated by others. The division in opinions would open the rift in the community if confronted by it every day.

### **EUROPEAN/AFRICAN**

Even if they make the appearance of not welcoming ethnic outsiders, as a small population Afrikaners must welcome outsiders. Those from the *stammlande*, the countries of origin – the Netherlands, Germany and France, and to some extent Scotland – are preferred, but anecdotally, it seems that there are many more marriages between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans than the vehement attitudes towards ‘the English’ would suggest. That is not to say that some people have not been disowned by their families for marrying English-speaking people, but that there have also been many assimilated into the Afrikaner population. There are English-speakers with Afrikaans surnames who are not Afrikaners because their fathers or grandfathers were disowned for not marrying Afrikaners. This insistence on sharp boundaries thereby ensured net loss rather than gain.

This, too, is not new to Orania. The animosity that was displayed towards ‘the English’ in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War – such that people emigrated so as not to live under British rule (Du Toit 1995) – made it remarkable that a system based on race which joined English-speakers and Afrikaners as allies should be established a few decades later.

The historical transition from the main group against whom Afrikaners defined themselves being the British to the various categories of non-white South Africans remains a puzzle in South African historiography. In creating a racially ordered society, English-speakers became the co-beneficiaries alongside Afrikaners. Robert Thornton (1995:214-215) points out that the introduction of the term 'European' into the political discourse was a way of appealing to a deeper commonality so as to overcome the conflict of the turn of the twentieth century. For Verwoerd, this also distracted from the fact that he was not born an Afrikaner. Whilst there is a kind of equality and assimilability with these other whites, the very porousness of the boundary provides a threat of the vulnerable and stigmatised minority too easily flowing into the comfortable majority. The threat of the dissolution of the group is more subtle than it is when considering their numerical disadvantage against black South Africans, making guarding against it all the more important. The very likeness of their closest cultural neighbours and thus political allies threatens the clarity of the boundary that distinguishes them. The perception of the degree of this threat varies between the more liberal and more conservative sections of the town: one of the aspects of the town's internal friction is whether the town should be insulated from the outside or whether a degree of porousness will not undermine the objectives of Orania's creation.

Ludwig suggested that part of the pessimism of white South Africans stems from measuring their country against Europe rather than Africa. Development and standards of living are compared with Europe, rather than showing South Africa's relative prosperity within Africa. Furthermore, those who feel disadvantaged are comparing the present situation with an imagined Europe, or what they had under the unsustainable apartheid system, rather than compared to what most South Africans have. Without going as far as considering themselves Europeans in the same way as people from Europe, there is an assumption that people who white South Africans recognise as being 'like them' should recognise the same. But this assumption that other white people share their degree of identification with others with white skin is not often accurate. The tension of trying to be simultaneously European and African, bridging those two categories which are in some respects considered to be mutually exclusive, sometimes leaves a gap into which liminal groups can fall.

Although language is a crucial factor in a person being Afrikaans, it is clear that speaking additional languages is a virtue, for the purpose of communicating with people who speak other languages. Afrikaans settlements in other African countries have retained their Afrikaans character or at least distinctiveness as white Africans. Yet when the populations are small and similar enough to surrounding populations to be easily integrated, as were the emigrants to Patagonia, within half a century they had become “Argentinians of Boer extraction” (Du Toit 1995:417). I did not hear the Argentinian example mentioned, but it is an example of the outcome of emigration that people feared. The bulk of the present-day emigrants go to other Commonwealth countries, where very little adaptation is required. Similarly, accommodating to the increasing use of English within South Africa is easily done when most Afrikaners can already speak it, making it harder to prevent mutual intelligibility coming at the cost of Afrikaans’s status as a public language.

Whilst Orania overcomes one of the major historical tensions of class stratification coinciding with colour, it retains the contradictions of viewing English-speakers as both enemies and allies. Those that can be assimilated to supplement the population can also be a threat when their numbers – coterminous with their political power – are too great. I had noticed that there were quite a few people in the town who it turned out were or had been brought up as English-speakers. Kobus van der Merwe told me there were up to thirty in the town – a relatively large number for an exclusively Afrikaans town. Lida explained that although there were several, they remained a small enough number that they would be assimilated into the town’s majority and not form a critical mass.

### **THE MIXING PROPERTIES OF CULTURE**

Lynette Mulder said that some people in Orania might disapprove of her job as a physiotherapist in Gauteng because it involved close physical contact with black people. She enjoys her job and that is not an issue at all. But she sends her sons to an Afrikaans Christian school because she thinks that is how their education should be. She thinks it is great that her kids have black friends – they are South African, after all. But it would be a different matter if they were to have black girlfriends, because relationships progress to marriages, and marriages progress to children, which raises



the question: how would the children be raised? Whose culture would prevail? This evokes ideas about endogamy and like marrying like in other contexts (see Walker 2013).

Whilst some kinds of people can be assimilated in to the benefit of Afrikaners, this permeability can mean those of Afrikaans origin can too easily adapt to other cultures. Crucially, this is seen not as gaining cultural literacy, but as ceasing to be Afrikaners, *losing* their culture. The intersection of different frameworks is seen as the encroachment of the more dominant on the less, rather than the overlaying of cultures. In either case of Afrikaners absorbing or being absorbed by outsiders, the question of the merging of identities is not raised: it is instead viewed as dissolution. From this perspective, there is something which makes hybridity nonsensical.

There is less threat of confusion between whites and blacks because of the view that their cultures are distinct. A black person is still black, regardless of their upbringing, and raising a black person to be Afrikaans, for example, is considered to alienate them from their natural community, and the same applies to other examples. People being enculturated differently from their descent group means they are alienated from their true selves, and this is seen as harmful for the individual and their descendants. Not fitting into a category means not having somewhere to belong.

If there is something in an identity that is understood as an essence, but given that enculturation is vital in the creation of the person, then there must be some degree of fit between nature and nurture for a person to belong in one category rather than bridging two. A person can be white but they only become securely Afrikaans through their upbringing, since they can be easily assimilated into other white cultures. People assimilated into like cultures can sit across categories to some degree, but their children can assimilate into their adopted cultural grouping. Thus, cultural mobility is possible across some boundaries – within the levels of civilisation that Johann Kinghorn (1986c:93) refers to, perhaps – without those individuals being understood to lose a part of themselves. Some boundaries can be crossed without producing nonsensical personhood.

Since Afrikaners are seen as a vulnerable minority, the porousness of boundaries becomes a threat to the group, and the loss of group members and

eventually the decline of the group is sad. If Afrikaners are dominated by another culture then it could lead to their dissolution as a group by being assimilated into the other group, but they do not consider it problematic to absorb others deemed sufficiently like them, for the sake of supplementing their population. In other words, a fluidity of boundaries is required to be able to assimilate and form alliances with similar others for the sake of survival, but which involves crossing the very boundaries that define the identity that needs to be saved.

### **THE TWO SCHOOLS**

The Volkskool (i.e. Afrikaans people's school) lies at the main intersection of the town. It was founded shortly after the town itself was settled in April 1991. Because of the small number of school age children in the town a strategy of independent learning was adopted so that students at several different levels could be taught by one teacher simultaneously. At present, there are three classes incorporating grades 0-2, 3-6, and 7-12. Students have a certain amount of work to do during the week and are free to make their own schedules. They read their course materials and then test their comprehension with a test on the computer, which is designed to accept several synonymous answers. This way there is no delay between the test and the feedback as with standard written tests so students learn correct answers more effectively. The senior teacher Wynand explained that this method is obviously only suited to subject matter that can be learnt by rote, and things such as literature study are taught via class discussion. But the fact that students are for the most part learning independently and simultaneously with students at different year levels allows the teacher to cope more efficiently with having many levels of students in one class.

The school has vocational programs such as hospitality and takes part in inter-school sports competitions in Hopetown. It also has distance learners who come periodically from as far away as Namibia. There is an educational program developed in Orania, previously used by the Volkskool, which is distributed for Afrikaans-speaking home school students around the world.

The CVO School is near Kleingeluk, in buildings that used to be hostels for coloured workers. It is part of a network of schools belonging to the *Beweging vir Christelik*

Volkseie Onderwys (BCVO, Movement for Christian People's own Education). Mari van der Westhuizen is the grade 0 teacher at the CVO School and a member of Orania's APK congregation. She explained that the APK separated from NGK when the latter decided to follow the government in its reformist agenda. The CVO Schools were then begun as a way of securing their future. The BCVO was established by the APK in 1994. This would have coincided with the integration and secularisation of schools and the new government's controversial education system. The school in Orania is affiliated with the APK but received the main support for its establishment from the more conservative of the two Gereformeerde Kerk congregations. The affiliation with the latter was due to the hesitance of the Orania APK to assist in the founding of the Orania CVO.

The Orania CVO was set up in response to the perceived absence of appropriate education, implying that the ideas which motivated its establishment existed prior to the school itself. The CVO was begun in 1998. Pieter Steenkamp, a local farmer, sought to build another type of school with traditional values. For him it was important for children to be brought up properly. He researched different types of educational systems from South Africa and overseas, and finally settled on the CVO system. He argued also that Christianity should be integrated into schools, as it is a vital part of children's upbringing and Christian education is part of their parents' fulfilment of the baptismal vow. However, he also stresses the role that parents play in the running of the school, rather than a board of owners who run the school from above, which was one of his many criticisms of the Volksskool.

As a Reformed Christian school, the CVO teaches in accordance with the Dordtse Leerrëels, the Canons of Dordt. Most members of the Israelite denominations also send their children to the school, and Roelien, mother of several CVO students, said there was some pressure from that group who did not believe in the same doctrine. Pieter, despite his views on parents playing a role in the school, explained that the CVO is a Reformed school and should remain that way.

Classes at the CVO have a more traditional structure and schedule with one year level per class. They adhere to a scheduled timetable and use the curriculum standard developed by the BCVO. Pieter Steenkamp explained that with the BCVO final school exam students are permitted automatic entry to university and are not

required to take extra exams, since the standard is higher than the national matriculation certificate. They do practice corporal punishment for disciplinary infringements, although this does not seem to be uncommon in South Africa.

The CVO has a more rigorous sports training program than the Volkskool, and they compete within the BCVO network. Their sports seem to have a higher standard of professionalism than the Volkskool but in being at the top of the BCVO competition, this means only the top of a network consisting of a few thousand students and not competing against anyone who is not white.

### COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS

After attending several public holiday commemoration events organised by the Orania Beweging, I noticed that they were not well attended and that the same group of people were usually there. I later learnt that since the CVO School, as a BCVO franchise, comes with a holistic plan for educating proper Afrikaners, they hold their own cultural events. Lida thought that the Volkskool builds an Orania identity, whereas the CVO creates more of a CVO School-based identity, being part of a network of similarly minded families across the country rather than a group of people who believe in building a *volkstaat*.

Some who supported a Christian Afrikaans language education argued that the CVO is not only an Afrikaans school but a particularly closed form of nationalistic school. Whether it is intended that way or not, in practice the students interact only with people who are like them. Some argue that this means children from Orania CVO are unable to cope with the world outside of Orania; one former student said that sometimes this is the case, and other times children discover once they get to university that they have been misinformed about many things, and become very critical of Orania. The Volkskool students's interactions are also largely with other Afrikaans-speakers, but not only conservative Afrikaners.

Some said that the two very different styles of education are suited to different types of people, so that it was an educational or personal difference that distinguished them, rather than a political line. Others told me that the Volkskool had a lower level of educational achievement and no discipline. Vicky, a new resident with four children, enrolled her children at the CVO because she was given the

impression that the Volkskool was for less academic students. After her children were bullied for being English-speaking and the youngest had learnt racist terms at the CVO School, she switched her children to the Volkskool where they excelled.

One mother said that due to being smaller, Volkskool had a more friendly and positive atmosphere, where all the children were friends. Students picked on by new children or others in the town were defended. This was shortly before she withdrew her children over the fact that children from Volkskool were taken to watch President Jacob Zuma's arrival. The man who related the latter information said that in his view, she was not so much hateful as fearful of black people, judging from her immense shock once upon encountering a black school inspector.

It is interesting that Orania has two schools, one very progressive and the other very conservative, and nothing in between. I was welcomed at each of the two schools but did not attend each for more than a day to avoid intruding, so I am not sure what the content of the lessons and syllabus actually were. At this point it is arguable whether the small town can sustain two schools, so any more are unlikely to be established, but whether there is a wish for another kind of education to produce another kind of Orania child is a different question. Also, suggesting the schools represent a *political* divide or another sort of divide is perhaps to over-determine the matter; in any case, there appears to be a rough correlation. Alternately, Manie Opperman suggested that part of the competition and polarisation of the two is simply because they are fishing in the same small pond.

### **BOUNDARIES: FOR KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OR IN?**

Dawie van Niekerk, whose children attended the CVO School, explained that part of the reason they came to Orania was that they would not have to mix with children from other ethnic groups. Even if their friends were white, if a school friend came to have a black boyfriend, how would Dawie and Celeste's children know this was wrong? If they met other children with other religious beliefs, he said, they might think that there was more than one version of the truth, or more than one God. His wife, Celeste, added that they were not so insecure in their faith that it could be challenged by school children of different religions, but it was still better this way. It was good to learn about different cultures, but not until the children first knew what

was right. They complained that the Volkskool was combining with the mixed public school in Hopetown for school sports competitions. What is the point of moving to Orania to then take your children to play sport against coloured children? He specifically accused Wynand, who was principal of the Volkskool at the time, of promoting this attitude. It is unlikely that he knew that Wynand deliberately took his daughter to play netball in Hopetown so as to have normal interactions with coloured people.

Dawie said they want boundaries, that letting down your guard is dangerous. He pointed out that within Orania there are less explicit displays of Afrikaans culture than they had experienced when they lived in Pretoria. Oraniërs were apathetic. His comments illustrated perfectly, that “ethnicity is an aspect of relationship, not a cultural property of a group. If a setting is wholly mono-ethnic, there is effectively no ethnicity, since there is nobody there to communicate cultural difference to” (Eriksen 2002:34) Since there is no ethnicity within Orania, the social conflict which breeds ethnic difference in everyday life is reduced, but debate ensues around whether that distinction still needs to be cultivated or whether the relaxing of pressure should just be enjoyed.

Lida outlined a liberal view on racism in Orania, explaining that the town can be a remedy for racism. There is no everyday friction, no need for fears about either security or cultural loss. Although people may not come to Orania for the right reasons, they can be taught tolerance by being in an unthreatening environment. Insofar as racism is partly an overreaction to everyday friction and perceived threats, the physically safe and culturally insular community can lead to the relaxing of these tensions. Having a stable cultural base in the town means interaction with outsiders is not regarded as threatening. According to Lida, Orania need not only be understood in terms of who is kept out, but who is kept in. Promoting Afrikaans culture need not be interpreted as being against any other cultures, or thinking it better than others. The children who grow up in Orania do not learn to fear people of other colours because the town effectively has no crime.

However, once I was talking to a high school student who asked me if I liked black people. I said I like people who are nice, and the only difference is that black people have different coloured skin. This person said that if black people are just fine

then why aren't they allowed in Orania? It was a very logical question, and I suggested that Orania might be about keeping Afrikaners in rather than other people out. In this case, the reasoning on which Lida's argument was based had eluded this child. This encounter suggested that in reality, children learnt these attitudes from their parents and to some extent school friends. Some children were in fact hesitant to interact with people of other ethnic groups because they also had no positive experiences to normalise it. This child had not had substantial interactions with black or coloured people and so any interactions were to be avoided, but could not provide any explanation as to why they should be avoided.

In the late 1990s when Wynand's son was young, he once addressed the coloured lady in a shop as *tannie*. The lady was so touched that she brought her colleagues over to look at the little boy who called her *tannie*. This story may not be unique but indicates the at least partial broadening of an ethnic group by using kinship terms within a linguistic group, and that unless it is taught, colour distinctions are not natural to children.

For those who think culture is maintained through practice, Orania is a safe space for the natural practice of something which faces challenges outside, so that people can relax without needing to assert or hide their identity. But for those who think definite boundaries are necessary, then focusing on the content which the boundaries define runs the risk of neglecting the boundaries. It may appear to be easier to maintain boundaries in Orania, but this is not necessarily the case.

But what exactly did Dawie and Celeste and other parents who shielded their children from non-whites think would happen in cross-cultural encounters? Both parents and teachers explaining the curriculum said that knowledge of South African society and its history was important, yet what Dawie said suggested this knowledge was only to be acquired through secondary sources rather than personal experience. Even if in terms of concepts of enculturation these things are boundaries which cannot be easily crossed, they still feel the need to set up physical boundaries. Whilst Oraniërs want their children to grow up as Afrikaners, they do not normally suppose this to be restrictively defined, they want them to be individuals, and Orania allows much scope to explore. Children are not prevented from exploring their surrounds

unattended or engaging in motor sports, for example, which has resulted in several serious accidents over the years, but they are prevented from competing in sports competitions against non-whites. These are, however, two different categories of risk: safety and security is about physical fear, whereas cosmological fear is about categories. The former can be moderated with various technologies, whereas preventing the latter relies on trusting in enculturation, hoping that children will act the way their parents wish. If there is any risk of the boundary being crossed then the starting presumption of cultural incompatibility and the innateness of *volk* membership is undermined. If the analogy of a kind of cultural contagion applies, then what is transmitted? Is the knowledge of similarity across boundaries acquired? For some parents, a certain amount of fluidity is possible, but for others, any intrusion is a threat.

J.M. Coetzee points out the contradiction in attitudes towards cultural contagion. Different categories of people were physically separated from each other through the designations of the Group Areas Act, with previously multiracial suburbs being bulldozed. Yet if mixed suburbs and everyday interaction leads to *gelykvoeling* (feelings of equality, empathy), how could separation be necessary to avoid conflict (Coetzee 1996:172)? This inconsistency about whether aversion is instinctive or self-evident, or not, or whether contact leads to conflict or understanding, is older than Orania.

Carel iv explained how he thought Orania would help Afrikaners. He had heard a physiotherapist explain the need for ‘stability before mobility’: that is, core stability underlies limb movement. He saw that this could be a metaphor for the cultural realm: people must have a stable base for their (cultural) identities before they can move beyond that and engage with the world with confidence rather than fear of diminution. In Orania people can be Afrikaans of their own accord, without needing to be defensive about the political aspects of that identity in day to day life.

### **ENGAGING WITH THE OUTSIDE**

This difference in attitude and whether people are fearful about interactions across boundaries, and which people are acknowledged as partners in conversation, is to some degree reflected in political engagement. Orania has some connections to other



groups who promote minority rights. These include the Flemish in Belgium and the South Tirolers in Italy. Occasional speaking trips by members of the Orania Beweging to Europe also visit Germany, and London, where large numbers of South Africans live. In recent years links and cooperative agreements have been formed with other South African communities, including the Xhosa community Mnyameni and the coloured community Eersterus.

In terms of party politics, the ideological part of the town is associated with the Freedom Front Plus (Vryheidsfront, VF+). Not all Oraniërs engage with party politics, seeing it as futile due to the dominance of the ruling African National Congress (ANC). The fact that many people in Orania are politically conscious and often active is insufficient to unite the town's residents around broad goals or political objectives. Orania being the main candidate for a *volkstaat* growth point means the VF+ is closely involved with it. While the party is certainly ethnocentric, it is not necessarily nationalistic. Jaco Mulder, until recently the party's leader in Gauteng, is closely involved with Orania and said he did not consider himself right wing. Both Prof Carel and Carel iv were at one point representatives in the Northern Cape provincial parliament.

The VF+ promotes connections with other minority groups internationally, and argues for the rights of Afrikaners to have culturally appropriate institutions on the same basis that other minorities should be granted those rights. It was through the VF+ that Afrikaners became members of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). The view is that Afrikaners, whilst having their own complex history, find themselves in a similar position to indigenous and other minority groups all over the world and should be accorded cultural rights on the basis of general human rights. Ludwig argued that whilst the South African constitution recognises that the country is comprised of ethnic minorities, it grants rights on an individual rather than a collective basis, which leaves some space for the actual organisation of cultural rights. They try to represent Afrikaners as a minority within a country comprised of minorities, and amongst other minorities around the world whose interests are not represented by the states under which they fall. Whilst the recent history of Afrikaners is different from other minorities, since they were so

disproportionately dominant, this does not mean they cannot be vulnerable to current political circumstances.

Where some people view South Africa and its people, services and government institutions as something that must be tolerated until they can be circumvented, others, whilst still feeling alienated from South Africa, are willing to talk to other communities and members of the government for their mutual benefit. There is a difference in approach within Orania between inward and outward facing elements. Whether Orania's future is in a safe isolation or a more porous boundary is reflected in the way they think children should be educated: either trying to keep them amongst their own kind to prevent plurality, or trusting that contact with non-Afrikaners will not lead to the dissolution of their identities. It is enculturation which creates the Afrikaners of the future, but outcomes can never be guaranteed.

### **DOING THE BEST YOU CAN**

For all of the ideologies and political strategies of Orania, there is a lived reality and honesty which slightly escapes them.

Celeste grew up on a farm in the Orange Free State. When she was younger she worked in the Netherlands as an au pair, and then worked in hospitality when she returned to South Africa, marrying relatively late. She had travelled and known people from all over the world. Although they had attended the APK when they previously lived in Pretoria, Dawie and Celeste now take their children to the GvdV. Members of that church observe the prohibitions on foods recorded in the Old Testament, and Celeste also adheres to all the fasts. When a visitor to Orania said that he was considering farming rabbits as they were quick to breed and thus profitable, Celeste agreed but pointed out that he should not try and sell them to the *volk* in Orania. When he asked why, she read sections from Leviticus which explained that rabbits were unclean.

She had planned to destroy a wooden chest which had a dragon carved on it, as the dragon was an image of an idol, and having a pagan image in the house could have negative effects. She had seen a Christian DVD which explained that idolatrous images can disturb the atmosphere of a house. One of the examples given was a child's restless sleep patterns, which improved once the image was destroyed. There

had been a wooden chest in the family but although Celeste was supposed to inherit it, a relative had taken it and given her another one instead. This one had a dragon among the patterns carved into it. Although the chest had held her wedding trousseau, Celeste was going to destroy it and other objects in the house. Others thought that such images did not have any efficacy. When I asked why this was such an important issue, Celeste explained that she did not want to face God one day and have him say 'No, not you'. Whilst one could argue about how supernatural processes might work and whether something has efficacy or not, or whether it could be wrong to keep something that has already been part of her life for many decades, what was at stake was ultimately no less than entry to heaven. In this wider perspective, attachment to material items was inconsequential.

One afternoon Celeste's husband Dawie helped me with some computer repairs. I had been in their house for several hours already when Celeste came to tell me, despite my protestations, that I was staying for dinner. The evening involved Celeste cooking dinner and supervising one daughter's routine for her ballet exam, the steps of which Celeste and I had learnt before she got through it without making any mistakes. The girls did their chores and we sat down to a weekday family dinner, the food excellent in accordance with Celeste's image as a perfect housewife. The girls bathed and while they put on their pyjamas and got ready for bed Celeste asked about how my mother had coped with a household, a job, two children and only one pair of hands. We then all sat on Dawie and Celeste's bed and she read the story of Samson and Delilah from an illustrated book of bible stories. The girls take turns to pray on alternate nights.

This ordinary and spontaneous evening demonstrated that at the end of the day, Celeste is, like all the people in Orania, simply trying to bring her children up as best she can, in the way she thinks is right.

### **ORANIA'S DEBATE**

The degree to which Afrikaners resented the British colonisers from the outset means that from the early nineteenth till at least the early twentieth century, Afrikaner identity was largely constructed in opposition to the British. But despite the animosity being renewed by the Anglo-Boer War, English-speakers still became

incidental beneficiaries to the Afrikaner nationalists' pursuit of political control on account of being viewed as sufficiently alike. The dominance of English-speaking culture ensures that the boundary that distinguishes them from Afrikaners remains fraught. Whilst Afrikaners and coloureds for the most part share language and culture, they are distinct groups, and the formation of a shared identity as Afrikaans-speakers is unlikely to replace the Afrikaner designation. The boundary between black Africans and whites is presumed to be impermeable, making the origin of some people's fear of contact with them unclear. There are not always reasons given for separation except for a firm belief that that is how it should be. These inconsistencies are older than Orania but still play out in their ambivalence towards the outside.

Oraniërs' understanding of the mechanism of culture is not borne out by what actually happens in Orania. Orania is maintaining the Afrikaans identity but in that process of doing so it is inevitably creating something new, just as the form that the variants of and precursors to Afrikaans identity have taken in other places and other times have evolved in their surrounding circumstances. Here, the observations of E.D. Lewis are illuminating.

While it may make sense to conceive in the abstract of clashes, conflicts, and collisions between cultures, there is in such thinking the danger of a misplaced concreteness which leads to confusion about how culture comes into being and disappears, that is, about how culture changes. Culture is neither created in impersonal clashes of ideologies, nor entirely in the responses a society makes to external forces... Rather, changes in the physical, political, economic, and social environments provide alternatives to previously normal ways of thinking and acting among which individuals may choose or to which individuals may devise novel counteralternatives for thought and action. Cultures encompass sets of interrelated ideas – ideologies – about how the world is, how it ought to be, and how people act and relate to one another within that world.  
(Lewis 1989:176)

Lewis locates cultural change in the accumulation of thoughts and actions of individuals. All the moments of creativity and adaptation are making Orania into something new, even if it is described as being Afrikaans in character. Orania's debate also reflects a difference of opinion on whether the symbols of Afrikanerdom, the public holidays and the various personal traits are important in themselves, or whether they are important for the role they play in sustaining the ethnonym 'Afrikaner' and keeping it distinct from other groups.

Some of Oraniërs' fears and folk models do not quite concur with what at least some anthropologists think about culture change. But beliefs not standing up to logical scrutiny does not preclude them from being the things people value. In the fight to sustain the Afrikaner group, which means its cultural reproduction in children, Oraniërs argue about methods. The conservatives characterise the liberals as trying to dance to the tune of a government that does not act in their interests, and the liberals depict conservatives as dancing to the tune of a time gone by. The group's very persistence means the stakes are high, but how can Afrikaners ensure subsequent generations turn out the way they need them to? Problematically, the relative freedom to change things and make decisions that Oraniërs experience in their everyday lives demonstrates that culture is not stable. Orania is more of a debate than a community with a defined centre. The town is characterised by argument, partly because many are there to contribute to the town, which means building it as they see fit, and also because they must spend all their time in the company of very few other people.

And despite their disagreements, they agree that Afrikaners as a group should persist because differences are a matter of divinely willed ordering, and that even if identity is partly inherent, ultimately their children can only really be Afrikaans if brought up in the right circumstances. Orania is a strategy for survival, so the conflict is based on different survival strategies. For some, safety is found in putting up walls. For others, it is giving people enough confidence in their cultural selves that they do not need walls. The visions of the future are both strongly dependent on the lessons of history, but different visions of history produce vastly different outcomes. This conflict about how to build the future of Orania and through it, possibly the future of Afrikaners, is played out through the schools, in what kind of social and vocational skills to teach the next generation.

## **VI : HOW PEOPLE IN ORANIA TALK ABOUT THEIR PAST**

South Africa's recent history is ever-present in the youths and memories of people in their thirties or older. History played an important role in the creation of Afrikaner nationalism (see Hofmeyr 1988), but now that history has lost its credibility and needs to be rewritten. Today's Afrikaners need to be critical about a past which has brought them to the precarious position they are in now, whilst keeping elements to substantiate their sense of group identity. If having a future to some extent means having a past, then it becomes about finding some way of redeeming their tainted past. There are different ways in which this is being done, which will be illustrated through accounts that different people told me. There are different perspectives on what to keep and what not to keep. Among Afrikaners a re-telling of their history is frequently important for explaining their position in the social order and why they feel they belong to and in South Africa. The history is not simply an apologist account, it explains the perspective and the rationalisations which people themselves use, how they see the place of their group in the world and in the present time.

Most of my discussions about history were with Wynand Boshoff, who is simultaneously dismissed as a liberal by the more conservative people in the town, and also acknowledged by those same people as the local authority on history. His perspective might represent the liberal Boshoff part of the town, but history was a matter where there were disagreements in emphasis even where people shared an overall political perspective. Discussions with the academic people in Orania gave the impression of a less certain interpretation of South Africa's past, particularly the account of apartheid. The perspective that Wynand and others presented challenged the received interpretations of apartheid. However, their critical view of the anti-apartheid movement also includes a critical view of apartheid, trying to assess what went wrong and arguing that the way apartheid was implemented contained the seeds of its own downfall, so they are trying to do it now in a consistent and sustainable way. Discussions with Wynand were a process of loosening the certainties of the standard account, while other people went further and asserted these revisions as certainties.

## **WHICH APARTHEID?**

When people spoke about apartheid, they meant grand apartheid. There was very little reference to petty apartheid and its everyday discriminations. There was discussion about separate schools, jobs and living areas, but it was framed in terms of the self-sufficiency of each ethnic group. Everyday separation was also justified for the sake of avoiding inter-cultural friction, since most people considered that there were differences between how different types of people conduct themselves – comments which mostly related to present-day experiences.

Jaco Mulder thought that apartheid would have had a very different outcome if petty discriminations had not existed. Whilst he thought there were broad cultural differences relating to how people conceive of time or leisure, there was no justification for discriminations and legislation to regulate people's lives to the extent that petty apartheid did. His experience included turning up for parliamentary debates at the appointed start time and sometimes finding himself the only one there, and thought that whatever the reasons for it, timekeeping was essential to a modern democratic or economic system. This, however, did not justify past legislation for separate windows at post offices and the like. Nobody mentioned separate toilets or all-white sporting teams, except for Wynand. He presented a paper one evening in December 2009 at Afsaal Café, in which, instead of turning to the historical literature on the legislation for separate public amenities he described his own upbringing in Pretoria in the 1980s (Boshoff 2009). He mentioned his shame at the recollection of separate teacups for black and white, at casual use of racist language and the Conservative Party's (KP) attempts to bring back separate amenities in the late 1980s. Although Wynand did not agree with it, he said that H.F. Verwoerd once justified separation at post offices and banks with the view that black people should not only see white people in official positions and think that it was white man's work, but see people like themselves. Segregation was, however, generally more widespread during the time when Verwoerd was still alive.

Manie Opperman explained that Orania is not a throwback to apartheid. The homelands policy involved social segregation but retained economic integration. They aimed to provide ethnic empowerment which involved decentralisation, with

the Bantustans forming new population and economic centres. Lots of the people in Orania had been involved in black upliftment. The economy grew to such an extent that job reservation was overrun, and they had trouble finding qualified black teachers and lecturers sometimes. Jobs were reserved exclusively for blacks in homelands so there were always opportunities there. The government put millions of rand into building capital cities for the homelands from scratch, but in 1994 the town of Bisho was substantially burnt down so lots of people were left without jobs.

Manie had taught maths in schools in Lovedale, Heilbron and elsewhere. When he lectured in archaeology at Fort Hare, the university never had any problems having their qualifications recognised by overseas institutions and had plenty of students going overseas. One such student, Loyiso Nongxa, was South Africa's first black Rhodes Scholar and was later a vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand.

The NP government put effort into developing vocabularies so people could function economically in their own languages, and this included writing a Xhosa dictionary. Manie explained that the Northern Cape is around 97% Afrikaans speaking, but because the government insists on using English the bureaucratic processes are slowed down. People thinking that the future is English does not always mean they can speak it fluently. This is one of the factors that contributes to municipal mismanagement, which is a major problem across the country.

When speaking about the majority of South Africans learning English as their second language, Wynand said that it could not be accounted for as a pragmatic move. He suggested that operating in a language you are not fluent in supposes that your own language is not good enough, which is a colonisation of the mind. One of the reasons that there can be strong feelings among Afrikaners towards English is because of the policy of Anglicisation when South Africa became a British colony. The close association between Afrikaners and Scots was a result of this. At one point more than half of the NGK ministers in South Africa were Scottish Presbyterians. Although they were English-speakers brought to South Africa to be ministers for the Dutch-speaking population, Davenport argues that they hardly did the bidding of the colonial authorities and were only brought after failing to find Dutch-speaking ministers (1978:32).



Wynand once asked me if I had read *Cry, the Beloved Country*. He said that the book suggests things which should be done in the townships, which were exactly the kinds of things Carel Boshoff did in Soweto when he was a missionary, such as setting up youth groups and various kinds of community organisations. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is considered anti-apartheid literature (even though it was written before the official introduction of apartheid) but Wynand said it was more accurately general anti-colonial literature. It is slightly ironic that the things recommended in this anti-apartheid classic were those actually implemented as part of apartheid – or rather, separate development, as they preferred to call it. Banning *Cry, the Beloved Country* for a while was actually counter-productive, but occurred within the context of the 1970s, which Wynand summarised as a brain dead period when things were simply banned instead of solutions being found.

In Wynand's account the National Party (NP) were too staunchly republican to be popular with the public but were elected because the United Party's Prime Minister Jan Smuts was not doing enough about the growth of the urban black population and the fast unplanned city growth during the war years. The white populace wanted black people within reach but out of sight, so the core of towns and their businesses were always white and around them were the black townships at a serviceable distance. Malan and Strijdom were not enthusiastic about investing in large scale apartheid so their measures were short-term, so the implementation of apartheid increased under Verwoerd's leadership.

The distribution of a small amount of land for a large proportion of the population may have been unfair, but there are factors which moderate it slightly. The 1913 Land Act is generally seen as restricting Africans' land ownership to 7%, but from another perspective, it slowed the appropriation of land by whites, which was still ongoing throughout Africa. Some of the land designated white, such as the present-day Northern Cape, is arid, whereas parts of the northern provinces, which included some of the former homelands, are fertile. Yet for grand apartheid to have worked, the homelands would have needed greater physical area and integrity and also several decades more time. Wynand's father Carel had been on a committee trying to consolidate the Homelands so that they would work better but there was a lot of opposition so they were unable to implement changes. Nevertheless, allocating

segments of land to the majority of the population was unviable so long as the white minority kept the remainder and also controlled the whole process. What they should have done, was designate an area for themselves and concentrate on that – which is what Orania is.

Wynand said he had been much more right wing back in his student days, because the far right wing always gave such straightforward solutions. His father, who was sometimes called the conscience of the right, would always complicate things. Carel had asked Wynand if he believed that God is almighty. Yes, of course. So can he make a stone large enough that he cannot lift it? Nowadays Wynand makes a habit of challenging the received opinion or the opinions of others in the town. The paper that Wynand presented at Afsaal was on the topic of whether apartheid was a crime against humanity. He queried the fact that apartheid was labelled as a crime against humanity, when compared against pogroms which have not been as subject to international outrage. He notes that no amount of comparison of statistical figures decreases the impact that harassment or disappearance of people has for them and those close to them. But neither the illegal activities of the security forces nor the everyday injustices are a complete account of apartheid. Two of the aspects of apartheid policy which are often singled out are the homelands policy, which created ‘tribal homelands’ for black South Africans, and Bantu education, a public education system for black children, which were the focus of Wynand’s paper.

The 1950s and 60s saw most of the colonial powers in Africa withdraw, leaving infrastructure and institutions for their successors and assuming the structures would persist of their own accord, and providing development assistance over the coming decades. By Wynand’s account, the process of decolonisation in other countries involved the colonial powers effectively leaving and wishing them good luck. Even if development in South Africa was under-funded, relatively more money and effort was put into it compared to other countries, and was more effective since it was not decided from a distant colonial centre. Based on the prevalent assumption at the time, that the structures would be sufficient to ensure development and stability, the gradual process of the NP handing over control of the homelands to their chosen African authorities allowed it to be read as a cynical attempt to install

allies and retain control over the homelands whilst paying lip service to self-determination.

It is essential, as far as the African is concerned, to start off from a tribal system, which he knows, and then gradually work towards Western conceptions of democratic government. The peoples of Africa cannot be transplanted suddenly into a Western form of society. The process has to be gradual (Verwoerd, cited in Hepple 1967:115-6)

Alexander Hepple interprets this slow development as a means of reassuring the white populace that development for Africans would not be depriving them of labour any time soon, and that “pegging the African people to tribalism ... [was the] best chance of holding back their advancement” (ibid.:116). Wynand argued that the homelands were part of a gradual process of training for leadership and governing so it was piece by piece. Industry was moved to the borders for the sake of prompting growth within the homelands.

The Bantu education system was indeed basic, but not indisputably for the sake of keeping black people undereducated and unskilled. It was effectively the rolling out a public education system to the first generation of people to become literate, which must be done gradually. Wynand, drawing on Giliomee’s work, argues that the idea of a white-controlled African government spending *any* money to introduce a public system for educating ‘natives’ was radical in the context of the time. Giliomee explains, “Verwoerd faced the problem of persuading white taxpayers to shoulder the burden of educating a group four times more numerous than itself at a point where they themselves still enjoyed only a fairly rudimentary education” (Giliomee 2009:191). If the Eiselin Commission into black education insisted there was no need for a different syllabus in white and black schools, where does this common story originate? Giliomee suggests that Verwoerd deployed crude language and seriously underfunded the system to prevent triggering the white public’s fears of losing control (ibid.:192). If standards were lower in schools with black students then this was more likely the effect of underfunding rather than the belief among the developers of Bantu education that black pupils had different innate abilities. Giliomee (ibid.:195) argues that the story that there was no science or mathematics taught to black students was untrue, but that there was a shortage of teachers qualified to teach them. Furthermore, the effect of the campaign for ‘no

education before liberation' should not be underestimated in different levels of education between white and black from 1976 onwards (see Boshoff 2009). The claim that the government "even tried to deny [Africans] command of English through encouraging the use of African languages" (Eriksen 2002:144) is countered with arguments for mother tongue education, that linguistic fluency enables more effective learning.

From this view, early theorising about apartheid involved arguing that there is an African way to be modern and urban which does not look the same as modern urbanisation in other places, and this is created by allowing an evolutionary form of development which was gradual rather than rapid. Wynand argues that it is wrong to interpret apartheid as a systematic effort to oppress without even considering whether it may have been a failed or badly executed attempt at development. Even less, despite taking into account its unsuccessful attempts at development and education and the atrocities committed in its name, apartheid cannot be described as a crime against humanity when compared to other such systems. Only when political bias leads to focusing exclusively on its negative aspects can such a picture be formed. Giliomee (2003b:375) cites a survey conducted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation where as many as 25% of Zulu speakers and 18% of Xhosa speakers agreed that the basic idea of apartheid was good, indicating that it cannot universally have been understood as blatant oppression on their part. These proportions are small, but the surprise is more that *any* would concede some good in apartheid if they had experienced it as it is usually depicted.

Within this reframing of apartheid is a revisionist understanding of the former Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd, who is a symbol of white domination to most South Africans. In sharp contrast, he is respected within Orania, and furthermore, Orania has a different relationship with him as he was the grandfather of some of the residents. Even if he was killed before they were born, it could be expected that people would have a different relationship with even a long-dead grandfather than simply a controversial politician of half a century ago.

Annatjie Boshoff, a sister of Carel and Adam Boshoff, was secretary to Hendrik Verwoerd's wife Betsie and accompanied the couple on many of their official travels. Tannie Annatjie was herself described by another person in the town

as being highly cultured and knowing how to behave in any situation. She explained that the way Verwoerd – *Doctor Verwoerd*, in Orania – is represented nowadays bears no resemblance to the person she knew, who she sat up with while he worked late into the night writing letters to all who wrote to him, self-evidently regardless of the colour of the correspondent.

André asked me whether I had understood Wynand's paper. He said that Wynand's view is basically his view, that apartheid was not a sin against humanity. Apartheid was not really as bad as they make out, it was in people's interest to make it sound worse than it was. The communists espouse a philosophy of divide and rule: a united community is strong, and they needed it to be weak. I asked who he meant by 'they'. He said the Eastern Bloc communist countries, because they wanted to get their hands on the resources. South Africa is a very rich country, with many natural resources including diamonds. A few days later at church, André's introduction included welcoming people to the first service for the new year, and filling people in on recent events, which included explaining Wynand's talk. He explained what Wynand had said, including that apartheid was not fundamentally different from other systems going back as far as the Romans. In other words, apartheid was a system that was as old as the bible so there could be nothing uniquely cruel about it. The UK and USA united to label apartheid a crime against humanity, as did the Eastern Bloc and China. It seemed that André and I went to the same talk and heard completely different things. For André, differentiation was in accordance with proper natural order, and he associated equality and uniformity with communism and therefore with the efforts of Satan.

## **COMMUNISM**

André had been in the air force when he was young. Most men who are now in their forties and fifties spent their formative years doing military service, fighting on the border between Namibia and Angola to prevent the communists – the liberation movements – extending their reach to South Africa (see Thompson 2006). André's first hand experience of fighting against the forces of chaos and uniformity in favour of development and progress meant that he did not accept the legitimacy of the current South African dispensation. The merging of the security services with the

resistance forces meant working alongside black people as equals, and that was unacceptable to him. Another worker in the town was in a similar situation and advocated being friendly to your enemies so as to get to know how they think.

Steve, who had also been in the security forces, accepted that the transition had to happen, but quit because the incongruity of suddenly having colleagues who he had been fighting against for much of his career was too much for him. He had once gone to Robben Island and the tour guide was telling the group that buckets were used as latrines and that they were then obliged to use them for food. Steve said 'you know that's not true' and the guide recanted. But even though on this occasion the story was amended because Steve challenged him, it indicated that liberties were being taken with the historical account to demonise the apartheid system and its proponents even further than they did of their own accord.

Koos cautioned against underestimating the influence that the Border War and the fear of communism had. The communist movements in Angola and Namibia were supported by the USSR and Cuba, and until the Soviet Union's implosion its influence in Southern Africa was a threat that was taken seriously. Kinghorn explains the use of the rhetorical device of the unacceptable alternative (1986c:106). Bearing in mind that apartheid coincided with the time of the Cold War and its oppositional politics, the logic works as follows: communists are atheists, so if communists are proponents of equality (or *gelykstelling*, social levelling) then Christians should oppose it in order to fight atheism. This logic easily implied that opposing communism meant supporting apartheid, and allowed those who fought against apartheid to be broadly labelled as communists (ibid.:107). The Israelite theology has a specific antagonism towards communism, we need not see this as not specific to South Africa. John Wilson explains its attitudes in the 1930s, "The British Israelite's aversion to 'Bolshevism' was not solely due to its atheism, for like many at the time, he made no attempt to differentiate between different shades of left-wing opinion, some of it eminently Christian; rather it was grounded in the deferential attitude towards authority, anti-egalitarianism, traditionalism, monarchism and xenophobia which seem to have been a necessary corollary of acceptance of the 'Identity'" (Wilson 1968:45).

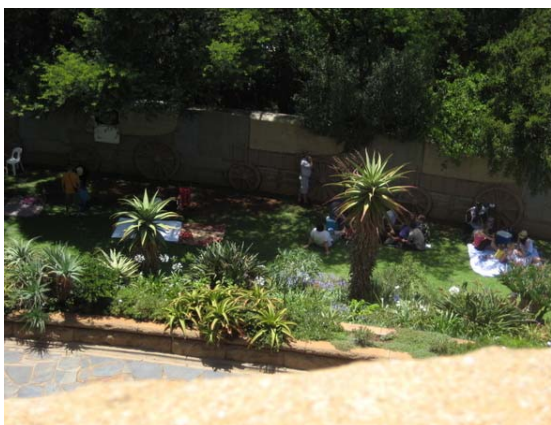
## **ORANIA'S HISTORICAL COMMEMORATIONS**

Many of South Africa's former public holidays are commemorations of historical events that are significant to Afrikaners, which is why they are usually no longer celebrated outside of Orania. Apart from New Year and religious festivities for Christmas, Easter, and Ascension, Orania's holidays mark historical events. To mark some of these occasions there are public events organised by the Orania Beweging, though in some cases the CVO School will hold its own events. A core group of perhaps thirty people attend many of these celebrations while most people attend none. Some occasions are formal, with religious ceremonies, and some more general social occasions.

The cornerstone of Afrikaner nationalist mythology is the battle against the army of the Zulu chief Dingane. The battle is considered revenge for Dingane killing Piet Retief, although it took place six months after the event. The group of trekkers circled their wagons in the fork of a river, limiting attack to one side. The story goes that on the eve of the battle, they made a covenant with God that if they won the battle, they would build a church in commemoration and celebrate the anniversary as a holy day. The fact that the Afrikaners suffered no deaths, whilst the Zulu casualties gave the event the name of the Battle of Blood River was considered an overwhelming mandate. This selective use of history and superior fire power provided a sense of entitlement that this land was theirs by divine right (van Jaarsveld 1980:15-17). The circle of wagons is known as a *laager*, an encampment, and this image of an inward-facing defensive clustering is a common way to describe protectionist Afrikaner behaviour. Whilst the patterns of containment of the Afrikaner group is accurately described by the term *laager*, I never heard the word used. In fact, it was after a whole year in South Africa that I learnt that *laager*, commonly given as an Afrikaans term (eg. Kennedy 1987:137), is in fact, not. In Afrikaans it is a *laer*.

On December 16th 2009 I was at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria for what is variously called the Day of the Covenant, Geloftedag, Dingaan's Day or the Day of Reconciliation. At noon on the 16th of December the light shines through a hole in the centre of the domed roof onto the centre of the cenotaph, spotlighting the engraving 'Ons vir jou Suid Afrika' (We are for you, South Africa). Perhaps it was

due to the searing heat of December, but the mood of the day was more celebratory than earnest. Although the popular account is that the day is a Sabbath commemorating a group of trekkers making a covenant with God – taken as a sign that Afrikaners had a divine mandate – the atmosphere was more like a picnic or *braai* than a church service. One person was holding an old South African flag, but other attendees seemed to be overseas tourists. Interestingly, Freedom Park had been built nearby to commemorate people who died in the struggle against apartheid. On the Day of Reconciliation, the official celebrations were held there, whilst Afrikaners spent the day at the Voortrekker monument. Black and white South Africans were celebrating reconciliation – separately.



The grounds of the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria



The sun shining on the cenotaph at noon on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 2009

Geloftedag in Orania in 2010 was a gathering in the community hall which I described in Chapter IV. It was one of the most solemn and best attended occasions in the town. Some people wore traditional *voortrekker* style costumes if they had them, but it was more in the spirit of dressing up for the occasion than nationalist nostalgia. There was a *braai* planned afterwards but most people dispersed.

For Majubadag on February 27<sup>th</sup>, celebrating the victory of the Boers over the forces of the mighty British Empire, many people travel to Majuba, a hill in KwaZulu-Natal, from which on a clear day you can see into the Free State and Mpumalanga (the former Transvaal). The Battle of Majuba was the defining event of the first war between the Afrikaners and the British in 1880-1881, known to Afrikaners the First War of Independence (Eerste Vryheidsoorlog). The story of the



battle is that the British army were stationed on the top of a hill. From this location they were vulnerable to attack by a relatively small number of Boer fighters who climbed the hill under cover of night and mist. John Strydom explained that the significance of Majuba is that it was the only time during the nineteenth century that the British Army was defeated,<sup>4</sup> with 250 British soldiers killed and only a handful of Afrikaners.

In Orania the day began with a prayer and a bible reading about David and Goliath, read by Francois Joubert. Some of the children and adults dressed up in voortrekker costume: loose shirts, waistcoats and cravats for the men; long dresses with wide sleeves and bonnets for the women. On this occasion some of the high school boys wore red t-shirts to represent the British army, known as the redcoats (during the Second Boer War two decades later they had changed their uniforms and were the khakis). School children were the focus of activities. They divided into groups and learnt about horse riding, target shooting or camouflage. The latter involved painting their faces and crawling on the ground whilst hiding behind branches. André explained to them that camouflage is best achieved by painting patches which blend into the speckled light of tree shadows.

The finale of the occasion was a battle re-enactment. The teenagers who were playing the part of the British redcoats waited at the top of the hill upon which the community hall stands, and the younger children tumbled over the scrub to the top of the hill.

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<sup>4</sup> Aside from the Crimean War, at least



Unintended historical revisionism as the result of older children playing the part of the British army and younger children enacting the Boers on Majubadag. Probably during the original battle the Boers were not held upside down by their ankles by the redcoats.



Oraniërs at the cemetery at Doornbult near Hopetown, where concentration camp inmates are buried.

Stigtingsdag (Founding Day) on April 6th marks the day of the landing of the VOC's (Dutch East India Company) fleet, led by Jan van Riebeeck. In 2010, some speeches were read and the small group attending the event went on a ride on the Oewerpark's pontoon boat. The day which marked the founding of Orania two weeks later was not mentioned until the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration after I had left.

The 31<sup>st</sup> of May is the date on which the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed in 1902. It marked the end of the Anglo-Boer War, or Second War of Freedom (Tweede Vryheidsoorlog). The day is known as Bittereinderdag (Bitter-Ender Day), commemorating those who vowed to fight to the bitter end. Orania's residents went to visit the Doornbult concentration camp which is at a farm just before reaching Hopetown. Wynand gave the historical address, explaining that those Afrikaners who had fought on the side of the British had hoped to earn favour in the probable event of their victory. But when Britain sought to hand back control they chose to deal with their former opponents the Boer generals, recognising in them worthy opponents. Karin explained that the bitterness towards Britain was due to there having been two wars on account of a mighty empire trying to beat a small nation that was already vulnerable. Especially during the second war, the tactics reached beyond engaging with the military forces and were disproportionate and unnecessary. And, moreover, they never apologised for something that could almost be considered genocide. As

many as 26,000 women and children died in concentration camps where they were taken after their farms were razed, to cut off support to the Boers' guerilla fighters. It was not considered by many that the creation of the Union a mere eight years after their defeat of the Afrikaners constituted a gesture of repentance by Britain. In 2010 the same date marked a century since the founding of the Union of South Africa, and a conference was held under the auspices of EPOG (the Orania-affiliated research institute) to discuss its significance and repercussions.

Taaldag (Language Day) marks the day of the founding of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Fellowship of True Afrikaners). There was an event at the community hall which involved a debate on the use of Afrikaans as an academic and technical language. They debated the need for specialist vocabulary in Afrikaans, or whether in the area of technology English terms could be acceptable in the same way that musical terminology is conventionally Italian.

Heldedag, Heroes' Day, marks the anniversary of Paul Kruger's birthday, which honours Afrikaner heroes. The CVO held a 24 hour relay bike ride on that weekend, and exhaustion following the bike ride was proposed as one of the reasons that attendance at the Orania Beweging celebrations was fairly low. The occasion was marked with a *braai* at the Oewerpark where some stories from history were told.

With these commemorations Orania maintains continuity with the previous Afrikaans-dominated South African system. They form part of the cultural foundation that is the ostensible reason for the town's creation. Yet in practice, a small group of people bear the formal part of the culture on behalf of the town.

### **YOUTH, OR HISTORY FOR THOSE WHO DID NOT LIVE THROUGH IT**

One feature of the December holiday schedule is a cantus. I was instructed to come with a jacket, tie, hat and mug. The room was adorned with flags from the former Boer Republics, but also the Flemish flag, the tables arranged to face the centre of the room on three sides to seat perhaps thirty. At the individual places were songbooks containing the program of the sequence of songs for the evening. The historical background explained that a cantus was a centuries old Germanic student tradition, although it turned out it had only been brought to South Africa in 1987.

From my description, a Dutch friend said that it bore little resemblance to a cantus in the Netherlands. The idea was that it was a ritualised parody, critiquing the authority of the educator by using Latin phrases, as Latin had been the language of education.

The event kicked off with a proclamation and the former national anthem *Die Stem* (The Voice), for which hats were held over hearts – but then the same action accompanied the Flemish anthem and then a song about the Dutch rebellion against the Spanish. University songs were sung by the handful of people who attended those universities, but the recognised universities were limited to Afrikaans language universities in the north of the country, thus excluding Stellenbosch. On account of most attendees actually being local high school students the *Volkskool* and *CVO* songs were sung, though the latter by only one student. The cantus leaders barked instructions and distributed punishments to people who took a sip of their drinks without being explicitly given permission. Although the same should have been true for removing jackets, they were lenient due to the cloying heat.

Many of the traditional or patriotic songs expressed bitterness more than nostalgia or pride. There was one song about collecting fresh manure, to a tune which most people were unfamiliar with. However, upon being told that the tune was *God Save the Queen*, they excitedly sang it again – standing on the tables. The whole event lasted four hours, the mood being enthusiastic pseudo-revelry, restrained by the punitive cantus leader.

The participants at the cantus were in their late teens or twenties. Although the occasion was meant to be good fun, the bitterness that the details of the ritualised occasion conveyed to me as an outsider was astonishing (I attended again in 2010 and the atmosphere was similar).

Singing the national anthems of nations you consider yourselves as being similar to, whether or not this is reciprocated, and parodying the anthem of your nation's great enemy of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, seemed to be creating a tenuous and selective thread through time and relatedness. Indeed, if the cantus was only recently practiced in South Africa then this animosity and attachment does not have its roots in the aftermath of the Boer War, but the dying days of apartheid. However, on the basis of later conversations, some people who had been there had rather more balanced views than the atmosphere at the cantus

suggested. Also, not all young people thought that four hours of singing patriotic songs sounded appealing.

Orania's schools counteract the state education system by teaching the history of Afrikaners, apparently setting it in the context of general South African history. Some children seemed well-informed and others did not. Some younger people were notably resentful of black people and felt that the government represented blacks and not whites, even though their lives were insulated from the South African state in a town and province where the government is at a distance. In other words, some hostility persisted in Orania's sheltered environment. The young men at Elim were generally not those who had grown up in Orania, which meant they had lived in other parts of South Africa. Some Elim workers had friends who were not Afrikaners or had ongoing personal connections with black people. Some individuals were an antidote to race consciousness in the town, but for others, their individual experiences did not stop them speaking ill of black people as a whole.

Some of the younger people held stronger views than their parents' generation, or at least views that were not supported by their own experience. It was remarkable when people in their twenties spoke about the concentration camps with passion and venom, a period which their ancestors of several generations ago experienced, and yet they could entirely bypass the recent history of which their parents were a part. Ludwig suggested that there was a correlation between people who still held resentment against Britain for their army's actions during the Anglo-Boer War, and those who could not imagine why most South Africans were still bitter about apartheid and feeling its effects. Those who are 'born free' seem to find it hard to relate to people's experiences under apartheid, or else they engage with apartheid through the new revisionist account as outlined through Wynand's eyes above, but sometimes without being able to sympathise with what people's lives were, and still are, like. The Afrikaner-centric account means emphasis on the white victims of farm attacks rather than structural violence and poverty. One needless death of someone they can relate to is too many, yet the deaths of people they cannot relate to is the concern of people who are like those victims.

Similarly, there are different kinds of nostalgia and hope for the future among different age groups. One of the most puzzling aspects was that there were younger

people who wanted things to be as they were when Afrikaners had control, yet apartheid was a time that they were too young to have experienced. Perhaps it is a calculation that Afrikaners need to be in power, at least in control of themselves, for things to be right, as it was only a short time ago. One young man effectively suggested wiping out the entire population of Soweto as a means towards whites regaining control. If nostalgia can be an effect of emigration, and people construct a new version of culture based on a place which does exist but has been evolving independently, then for Afrikaners who do not feel at home in contemporary South Africa, this place, the object of their longing, does not exist anymore. The object of their nostalgia is temporally removed, in which case the imagined construction is not so easy to deconstruct except through historical argument. If no travels can provide a shock of reality then it is probably easier to forget how tentative the grasp on that place was.

The revision of history in Orania to focus on things that are not shameful so that people can take pride in their past presupposes an understanding of the problems of the recent past. However, unless children learn about or adults recall that more recent problematic past which led to their present situation, focusing on periods when Afrikaners were heroes or victims rather than the agents of others' victimhood can increase the feeling of injustice of the present situation.

### **CONSPIRACY THEORIES**

In the context of living in a country that does not always make sense to them, some people also told stories purporting to reveal conspiracies or secret networks. For some, this knowledge would help them to prepare for the future and to avoid falling victim to harmful lies. It involved reading agency rather than anarchy into events.

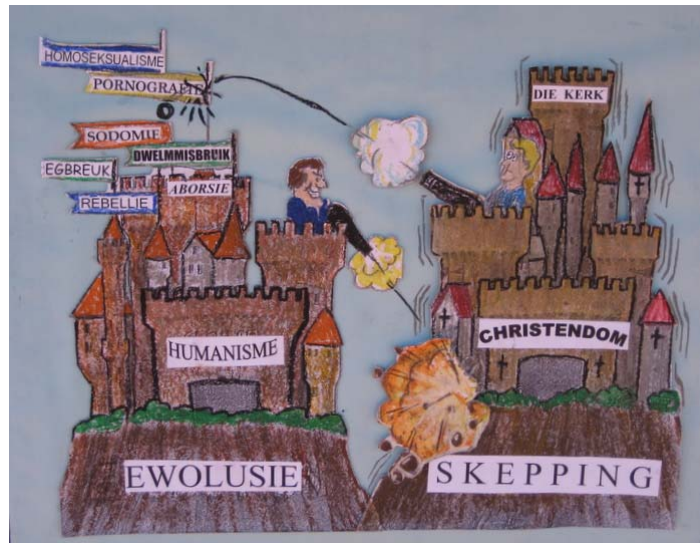
A few times there was discussion of the Suidlanders group, who believe in the prophecies of Siener van Rensburg. For example, I was told that one of the prophecies told of a great war that would follow the death of two leaders. One death had recently occurred, referring to Eugene Terre'Blanche's murder, and my informant said that he believed that Nelson Mandela was already dead, but this was being kept secret as the country could not afford a funeral for Mandela in the run-up to the World Cup.

Another relatively commonly held belief was that of the Uhuru, an alleged planned massacre of the white people in South Africa. At that time, people expected the Uhuru to take place around the time of the World Cup, although it was usually claimed that it would follow Mandela's death. Two visitors who passed through Orania were in fact in the process of moving to Botswana to avoid the bloodshed. They told me not to attend some World Cup matches as I had planned, that it would be safer to stay in Orania, or, better still, to leave the country. He said there would be military preparations going on in Orania, I would just have to become more attuned to them. The man told me about his experience in the army during the early 1990s, saying he had been involved in covert operations where it is still not known that the South African Defence Force was present. His claims about the coming upheaval and massacres he claimed to know through his former colleagues who were still in or in touch with military intelligence. The story involved arms stockpiles and military training camps across the borders, motivated by bitterness at South Africa funding a month-long party for rich foreigners whilst its population lived in poverty. Those citizens were being displaced for the World Cup infrastructure, and the workers who had built that infrastructure could not afford tickets.

According to Koos, these prophecies, which were as vague as prophecies typically are, had undergone a resurgence in popularity since they were written about by one of Van Rensburg's descendants, Adriaan Snyman. Van Rensburg had been in the forces of the Boer War general Koos de la Rey, who had decided his strategy on the basis of the prophecies during the Anglo-Boer War. I am unsure how most of the Suidlanders in Orania first heard about Siener van Rensburg, but certainly other sources of information purporting to reveal hidden truths circulated in the town.

Dawie van Niekerk lent me a DVD about science education called *Lies in the Textbooks*. The American presenter 'debunked' the theory of evolution, which was being taught in schools despite its dubious foundation in empirical science. It was framed in terms of revealing information which it is in the interests of the establishment for people to remain ignorant about. However, I heard the same arguments that were presented in the DVD from other people during other discussions. Books and DVDs, including the one Celeste had seen which convinced

her to destroy her trousseau chest, circulated among sectors of the community, showing up who was sympathetic to certain kinds of theories about hidden structures.



The tower on the left, labelled Evolution, says: homosexuality / pornography / sodomy / drug abuse / adultery / abortion / rebellion, humanism. That on the right, Creation, says: the church, Christendom.

At Orania's annual show there were stands set up by local businesses, groups and individuals. Some provided information and others had things for sale. One stall with a banner saying 'Creation vs Evolution' had posters and pamphlets explaining the case for the literal truth of the biblical account of creation, although I looked in vain for the section making the case for evolution. In the account which the stall presented, the church was the bearer of morality, and belief in evolution amounted to a rejection of God, order and all that is good. There was further literature on the pagan origins of Christmas and some common Easter symbolism, which one of the stallholders had written a thesis on.

Wynand said that in his view, there are many more people now who believe that the account of creation provided in Genesis 1 is factually accurate, than when he was younger. He said when he was younger it had been widely accepted that evolution was true. There was a dispute within the APK once, when one member of the congregation, a teacher at the CVO School, refused to take communion with Manie Opperman who, as an archaeologist, counted the age of the earth in billions of years rather than thousands. The church elders, however, refused to censure a respected member of the community on those grounds.



At the two evangelical churches there was an emphasis on humility and wealth as a spiritual rather than material realm, where having the latter appeared to preclude the former. This sometimes led to caricature of the people in the town who valued material wealth and who showed their possessions. Yet the town seemed to be remarkably free of ostentatious wealth, and in any case, there was not much that money could buy in Orania. Although on the whole people in the town were not very affluent, demonstrating distinction would not offer any social benefit and actually produce the opposite. Some of the people who had incomes outside of the town or whose farms had a high rate of turnover were also very generous. In conversation people would express respect for certain individuals who had worked hard and been successful. I never understood who the rich people in the town actually were. They were possibly best kept vague and unidentifiable, as a moral point could be more effectively made if it did not cause social discord.

Once in a Burgerraad (Citizen's Council) meeting, Johanna Pohl, an Orania supporter, referred to an attempt during the 1980s to form a world government. Although no details were forthcoming about who had tried to do this, it was 'common knowledge' provided as an example of a threat of people trying to wipe out distinction and differentiation. Similarly, the Illuminati were a secret society whose membership and aims were not specified, except that they spread misinformation for the purposes of controlling populations internationally, and were implicitly successful amongst other people.

Another type of accusation which was made occasionally was that the town, or alternately the provincial or another administration, was being covertly controlled by the Broederbond, the Freemasons or the Illuminati. Again, specific individuals' names were not always forthcoming. One man explained the identifying characteristics of Freemasons including hand signals and postures, although the impossibility of knowing the identifying characteristics of a secret organisation to which he did not belong was lost on him.

Once, during a discussion with Carel iv and Ludwig, I mentioned the fact that people had told me about the involvement of secret organisations. They said there are people in the town quite outspoken in their views against Freemasons and their alleged influence in the town. When I asked why this might be the case, they

explained that when people see others more successful than they, it is easier to believe that other people are receiving assistance than that they themselves do not work hard enough. It seems additionally interesting that a local explanation for local ideas should be that people involve occult logic to explain the success of others.

In the 1990s Orania had been home to a large dairy. I had heard from some of those who had been involved in the enterprise that it had failed because one of the partners had been siphoning money from the business. I was then surprised to hear others say that it had simply been a bad time for dairy farming, when prices were in decline – and yet, it seemed more plausible to attribute the failure of the dairy to dishonesty than to the view that in retrospect, the venture was bound to fail for external reasons beyond their control.

Lize had told me that she did not enjoy reading, and I suggested she might enjoy it if she found the right books. Since she was 12, I suggested the Harry Potter series, which I thought had been translated into Afrikaans by the poet Antjie Krog. Lize said that her aunt said Harry Potter was evil, because magic did not exist and so must be the work of demonic forces. Whilst I disagreed with this characterisation of the books, I checked the library to see if the series was in fact available. Since most of the books were donated and seemed to be at least several decades old, its absence might not be a mark of disapproval. I asked Anje Boshoff about it, who told me that she likes the Harry Potter series, but that some people disapprove of magic and anything associated with the occult, and would on those grounds probably disapprove of the Volksskool's play. At the time, Anje, Ludwig and I were painting sets for the *Die Orania Sprokie* (The Orania Fairytale). It told the story of a town which depended on a magician for things to function: for the flowers to be watered, the produce to be harvested and the town to successfully go about its business. The overworked magician becomes exhausted and needs to rest his powers, leaving the town's residents unable to keep the town on its feet. The magician tells them that they need to learn to depend on themselves; when they do, all is right again.

That people tell stories to account for situations or events is to be expected, but it seems noteworthy that the above stories largely offer accounts of alternate causality or agency. They involve revealing covert power that acts against Christians, Afrikaners, or honest Oraniërs. They are powerless, or at least their control over

situations, and the means for regaining it is through being a good Christian and loyal Afrikaner.

### **NARRATIVE THREADS**

The historical accounts that are communicated in Orania are interesting in what people include or leave out of their narratives. Certain stories or associations create connections. For example, around the town you will see Orange Free State and Transvaal flags, such as on people's cars. Since most migration northwards was in the twentieth century when the Boer republics no longer existed, the association with trekker history is more a symbolic association than a personal history, even if people may themselves have come from the provinces where the OVS and Transvaal had been. They hark back to a time of independence, heroic figures, and the war and suffering which ended their independence.

Several Oraniërs admitted that for all the different retrospective analyses of apartheid, they would not want to have been a black person under the apartheid dispensation. However, when I mentioned this to Anje and Ludwig once while we were painting sets for the school play, they said that was not the point: you could not wish to have any identity other than the one you have. If you admit that it would have been better to be white rather than black under apartheid, then it implies that you would wish to be black now, which you would not: you are who you are. And, Anje added, that is one of the reasons for coming to Orania: to step out of the ongoing argument about the past and whose fault it was and do something constructive, to build something.

I mentioned that a friend had pointed out that during the Anglo-Boer war the Boers had sabotaged the train lines, and it was the train lines which the British relied on to transport food to those interned in concentration camps. In other words, the Boers had unwittingly contributed to the sad plight of their women and children (which remains a sore spot over a century later). Ludwig thought it an interesting point, but Anje said that the concentration camp policy had been deliberate. Kitchener had been brought in to implement the scorched earth policy after its 'success' in Sudan.

Whilst some Oraniërs regret the loss of power that the transition to democracy has meant for them, some more academic perspectives include a candid reassessment of apartheid's failings in an attempt to recognise why those mistakes were made, but to recognise the achievements of the National Party alongside them. Despite differences between more and less academic expressions about the lessons of the past, the accounts all carry themes of the consequences of others having power over groups.

The dominant historical paradigm in South Africa is that of the struggle for liberation from apartheid. The views heard in Orania diverge from or contradict the accounts that are heard among other South Africans, though such tensions are common since history is both ever-present and contentious, varying between ethnic groups, academic perspectives, and along other variables. Whilst Orania perhaps represents an avoidance of historical responsibility, it could also be interpreted as moving on from that damaged past and not wanting to be defined by past mistakes in everyday life. The Afrikaners' history is the cause of their stigmatised identity in the present, but a perspective on the past has been integral to Afrikaner nationalism since its formation in the late nineteenth century and that historical perspective has given form to their perspectives on the future, making it hard to disown that past completely.

The perception of Afrikaner victimhood is constructed and supported through historical narrative. Jaco Mulder once asked me whether I thought that this current period in history was merely the second half of the end of Afrikaners, the first being the Second Anglo-Boer War. I told him I thought the story was not yet completed, no outcome was certain.

## VII: SUFFERING, MORALITY AND VICTIMHOOD

Power gained through violence and revolt is marked by passions that endure for generations – C.W. de Kiewiet (1956:15)

One of the things which was constantly repeated in Orania was that people do not understand Afrikaners. There have always been those willing to suppress Afrikaners, they say – their history has been a constant struggle for freedom and self-determination. People do not seem to care about all the women and children killed at the hands of the British during the Anglo-Boer War, that the government accepts their taxes whilst taking measures to remove their language and history from the public sphere. This account of being historically under threat extends as far back as the first settlement of the Cape in the mid-seventeenth century, and even further back to Huguenots migrating within and then leaving Europe due to persecution; it continued with the meddling of the British during the colonial period, and extends into the present: Orania is itself a means for Afrikaners to take charge of their own affairs. Contrary to the current historical paradigm, apartheid can be seen as the outcome of a feeling of vulnerability for many Afrikaners, a means of ensuring survival and harmony for all groups based on an assumption of ethnic groups as coherent units. Explaining how and why apartheid came about makes more sense with this perspective than with recourse to instrumental or material benefit, which lends itself to assuming moral inferiority of informants.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's version of the social contract forms an instructive basis from which to analyse the dynamics of South African society. In his view, society is comprised of reciprocal relationships, where "*[e]ach of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and we as a body receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole*" (Rousseau 1994 [1762]:55). This means that a society is the union of many individuals, who will be stronger as a collective and each benefit more than they sacrifice in submitting to a common agreement. Even if this social contract is tacit, the idea is that each person who

participates in society complies with its rules on the assumption that they will benefit in return through others who act in accordance with the same rules.

Immediately, this act of association produces, in place of the individual persons of every contracting party, a moral and collective body, ... which, by the same act, is endowed with its unity, its common self, its life and its will. (ibid.:56)

...As soon as the multitude is united thus in one body, it is impossible to injure one of its members without attacking the body, and still less to injure the body without its members being affected. Hence duty and self-interest oblige both contracting parties equally to give each other mutual assistance, and the same individuals must seek, in their double capacity, to take advantage of all the benefits which depend on it. (ibid.:57)

In this way, a society is a unity bound by morals. The social contract can also be said to define a moral community, since it is fundamentally moral expectations which define the expectations of people's behaviour towards each other.

The social contract outlines normative society where people comply with behavioural expectations on the basis that they will be accorded the same respect in return. Two things follow from this. First, a society is comprised of those to whom the social contract applies. Second, if one side does not uphold their side of this reciprocal arrangement, an individual becomes alienated from the society either because they are not complying with moral expectations and thereby are not respected in return, or if an individual does not receive the protection earned through their compliance, then there is no incentive to behave morally. In a cyclical way, then, the individual is only in a social contract with those who can be expected to conform, and are recognised as being similar. This is necessarily dependent upon the visible markers of social categories. In a multi-ethnic state, where different ethnic groups are seen to have different and not wholly compatible moral frameworks, visible markers could be said to be all the more important. The expectation of incompatible differences between people is usually explained in terms of cultural difference in South Africa.

Fredrik Barth explains that these cultural differences are evident in visible markers and behaviours or values, but in everyday interactions in a multi-ethnic state where differences are considered to be significant, the latter can only be inferred from the former.

The cultural contents of ethnic dichotomies would seem analytically to be of two orders: (i) overt signals and signs – the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, often such features as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life, and (ii) basic value orientations: the standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged. Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity. (Barth 1969:14)

Barth describes these moral expectations as properties of an ethnic group, and Rousseau as part of the social contract. But if the social contract outlines a community of common moral values, this need not be coterminous with the whole population of a state. The society can be limited to an ethnic group, if the content of the “standards of morality and excellence” are judged to be different between the different ethnic and other groups of which a state may consist. The dynamics of South Africa make more sense if it is not considered to be properly one society, but can be many.

Morality – what is right and wrong, both in others’ and one’s own actions – is not constant. It changes over time, and in assessing right and wrong, a crucial point is always: *with respect to whom*. Appropriate behaviour in one context can be wrong vis-à-vis another person or group (Browning 1993). Morality must logically be a property not of actions but of social relations. In terms of the political situation surrounding Afrikaners, as well as other groups, they are judged after the fact with the assumption that a universal and easily recognisable morality applies. ‘Terrorist’ or ‘rebel’ or ‘freedom fighter’ carry moral connotations, while they describe a relationship vis-à-vis a state. Any kind of previous support for apartheid is considered morally reprehensible, as is, frequently, any attempt at relativising the period, even though the context in which people held those opinions was a police state where information was tightly controlled.

The existence of a society depends on reciprocity, and where this does not exist, sociality is limited to those who can be trusted to reciprocate. If ethnic groups are ordered by internal and external characteristics, then in their everyday interactions, identifiable visible signals mark out the boundaries between who is ‘like’ and who is ‘unlike,’ and therefore who can be trusted. People’s outward

appearance communicates to those around them a message which is read in terms of shared standards and moral expectations.

### **THE SOCIAL POLITICS OF SUFFERING**

Joel Robbins (2013) argues that the successor to anthropology's focus on the 'other', the primitive, savage, or otherwise radically different, is that in the present, anthropological subjects are bound by their commonality in suffering. All people are subject to suffering, to trauma, and thus this susceptibility is grounds for empathy, a means of understanding ethnographic subjects and ethnographic work.

Robbins argues, however, that it is not anthropology that has directed this re-positioning of the subject in relation to the ethnographer, but merely that anthropology has followed the dominant cultural concerns towards a view of common humanity rather than particular difference. The place this found within anthropology in the 1990s, is a trend towards a new kind of writing "in which we do not primarily provide cultural context so as to offer lessons in how lives are lived differently elsewhere, but in which we offer accounts of trauma that make us and our readers feel in our bones the vulnerability we as human beings all share" (ibid.:455). This means that if the objective of the writing is empathy between reader and subject, then it carries a moral dimension also, because a reader empathising with the victim of trauma will position them against other actors, specifically those whose ideas or actions are opposed to those who are victims.

Robbins draws on the work of Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2009) on the social history of trauma. They argue that over the last century, the victim of trauma has changed from a subject of suspicion to one of empathy, a symbol of resilience and humanity. With the rise of the psychological and psychiatric diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder in the late twentieth century, comes the recognition of an event leaving internal scars in the psyche of all those involved: the victims, perpetrators and witnesses. In their empathy with victims, witnesses to traumatic events can also be scarred by relating to those who suffer directly. Fassin and Rechtman argue that trauma is something shared by both victim and those responsible for trauma, such as all the combatants of the Vietnam War, binding them in one moral framework. Yet, they admit that whilst this is theoretically the case,



“[t]rauma is asserted as a principle in whose name indignation is expressed and legitimized, but at the same time it annuls other moral or political positions” (ibid.:97). If an event is caused by humans then someone must be at fault: victim and perpetrator are logical correlates. If their common trauma frames victim and witness as morally equivalent, then the reader who is asked to empathise is on the same plane as them, and thus also set against those who inflict the suffering, or indeed take no action against it.

Robbins explains further of “the status of violence and suffering as realities beyond culture, and hence as realities with universal and in some ways obvious import that do not require cultural interpretation to render them sensible” (2013:454). The choice of subject is a kind where cultural context is not required to understand it, but is intelligible despite cultural context. Whilst this is a powerful point in recognition of common human experience across cultural differences, it has another consequence: rendering a certain interpretation self-evident. We do not need to understand the cultural context and all the contingencies that implies, in order to understand what is right. Although Fassin and Rechtman argue that theoretically, trauma brings together all involved groups into one moral framework, they acknowledge that in practice, the ability of people to relate to certain kinds of others, and thus to acknowledge their victimhood, affects this moral unity:

Cultural, social, and perhaps even ontological proximity matter; as does the a priori valuation of the validity of the cause, misfortune, or suffering, a valuation that obviously implies a political and often an ethical judgement. Thus trauma, often unbeknownst to those who promote it, reinvents “good” and “bad” victims, or at least a ranking of legitimacy among victims (Fassin & Rechtman 2009:282)

However, suffering, even nobility in adversity, is not the same as a positive morality. These might become connected because to question a trauma victim could be seen as immoral. Nevertheless, this means, then, that one traumatic event in someone’s life is raised to the level of defining them generally, which is problematic for the victim themselves, and puts them beyond question. Because the trauma of one event resonates through people’s lives, how far this moral unquestioning might extend is unclear. This takes away the multidimensionality that is the starting point of a conflict.

## **ON THE MORAL COMMUNITY AND NOT BEING PART OF THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA**

We can thus understand why the boundary between collective trauma and individual trauma is as difficult to discern as is the passing of historical trauma from one generation to the next. There is no need to explore how we move from one to the other... The validity people are willing to accord to trauma in order to relate the experience of descendants of survivors of the Holocaust, of the Armenian or Rwandan genocide, of victims of slavery or apartheid, is not the validity of a clinical category but rather of a judgement – the judgement of history. In other words, trauma today is more a feature of the moral landscape serving to identify legitimate victims than it is a diagnostic category which at most reinforces that legitimacy. ... It identifies complaints as justified and causes as just. (Fassin & Rechtman 2009:284)

South Africa's interim constitution of 1993 paved the way for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which held its first hearings in April 1996. The commission would investigate gross human rights abuses which occurred between 1960 and 1994 by hearing accounts by victims, and grant amnesty to those perpetrators if they provided full disclosure of their crimes, and if they could demonstrate political motivation for their crimes (Verwoerd 1999:117). The commission was one of the most poignant and far-reaching images of the transition. It has been viewed as a kind of cathartic repentance and closure, but is also much more complex than that. The focus on only the few worst cases of violence and not on the many injustices of apartheid means that the emphasis of memory is more towards covert military operations and guerrilla attacks than everyday humiliations.

Deborah Posel (2008) writes about the nature of truth commissions and their implementation from the 1970s onwards. Since they are institutions which follow from a period of conflict, and involve various groups with different or even incommensurable accounts of the past, they have become a means for bridging divisions and creating a unified historical narrative. Truth commissions "position the pursuit of truth center stage in a drama of efforts to broker peace and transcend past histories of brutal violence and painful division. Truth commissions, then, are particular techniques of 'nation building'" (ibid.:119-120). Following Hannah

Arendt, Posel argues that after the holocaust notions of historical progress were obsolete. History was no longer something where the negative aspects could be hidden beneath a coherent whole, but instead, had to be confronted and commemorated, termed 'negative commemoration'. Instating a truth commission instead of Nuremberg-type trials acknowledges that none of the parties enters the discussion with clean hands (Boraine 2000:11-12). The impasse in South Africa in the 1980s meant that the conflict could only be settled by negotiation, as no party to the conflict was significantly dominant over others. Yet neither were they equivalent, as one was negotiating the loss of power and another the gain. Posel draws the link between the creation of the new society through the narratives from the TRC, and the specific aim of giving voice to those whose suffering has not previously been acknowledged.

Indeed, the politics of negative commemoration is inseparable from a politics of victimhood and the 'victim consciousness' attached to it. Being declared, and claiming the status of, a victim is also a positioning in contemporary political fields of rights and entitlements, obligations and responsibilities. (Posel 2008:123)

Whilst the TRC is in name and intent aimed towards restorative rather than retributive justice, the fact that it involves the different positioning of the doer and done-to, not to mention that the South African state under the control of the NP had been an international pariah for decades, means that it is subject to the complications and assumptions discussed above. Again, Posel explains:

This process of truth telling... forms the basis of a mode of justice that is more reconciliatory than punitive, based on admissions of wrongdoing and the moral catharsis this affords. ...truth has reemerged as the basis of virtue, formulated in the name of that which we all share, our common humanity, as the basis for the ascription of universal human rights. (Posel 2008:126)

Yet it is not exactly truth which provides membership of a moral community, but admission of wrongdoing. If the starting point is gross human rights violations, simply telling the truth in exchange for amnesty will not gain entry to a moral community. Repentance implies rejecting an existing moral framework and acknowledging another. Thus, the forum is never morally neutral. For the victim, recognition; for the perpetrator, openness and repentance. Difficulties arose during

the TRC when victims disputed the granting of amnesty or when former members of the security services provided full disclosure but without showing any regret. Whilst the TRC included many examples of forgiveness and of people reaching across former divides in tearful empathy, the above discussion suggests this is predicated on acknowledgement of wrong. Amnesty could be granted on condition of truth telling, but the symbolic renewal of South African society required giving ground, so truth traded for amnesty rather than closure was not well received: “[t]he commission seems to be saying: before we are through with you, you will see the human faces behind these figures” (Krog 2002:57).

But if those actions are understood by their context – indeed, political context was one of the conditions for amnesty – then it requires people to re-evaluate much more than previous actions. Many applicants to the TRC explained that the abuses they committed were endorsed by the state and society of which they were members (Foster, Haupt & de Beer 2005; De Kock 1998; see Seldon 2007). Until the early 1990s young white men were conscripted into the army for two years of compulsory military service. Although the South African state governed by the National Party was considered illegitimate by most within and outside South Africa, it was nonetheless a state being threatened from within and without by insurgents. Whilst it may seem cynical for people to defend atrocities by claiming they were defending their country against communists, the 1970s and 1980s was a time when many countries were engaged in the Cold War and South Africa was fighting communist liberation movements in Southern Africa. If people argued the legitimacy of those reasons they were involved in the first place, then remorse means accepting those beliefs as false. Doing so means denying their viability in the present, and those reasons are frequently embedded in their society, upbringing, belief system and identity.

Antjie Krog describes how the theoretically open and equal footing of the TRC changed, and remorse was expected alongside truth. “Reconciliation will only be possible if whites say: Apartheid was evil and we were responsible for it. Resisting it was justified – even if excesses occurred within this framework. Mbeki says that if this acknowledgement is not forthcoming, reconciliation is no longer on the agenda” (Krog 2002:58). In the case of South Africa, political transition to

democracy also means an awkward transition of former enemies being also recognised as suffering subjects, and this is necessarily difficult in terms of the reconstruction of individuals' personal narratives: your enemy is now your brother. How do people, both individually and collectively, change their minds about the past and come to agree that all that they believed in, worked for and took for granted in the past was wrong? Why accept someone else's judgement of your past? Even if that is done, how do you accept your former enemy as your new neighbour, colleague and friend? Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was intended as a cathartic cleansing exercise, it aided the new system by not merely revealing the past but imbuing it with a new life, so that the victims of the past have gained new moral legitimacy, and the perpetrators of the past must atone for their sins. That means that they had to deny the framework which made those actions possible and thereby deny moral relativism even if differences of opinion are recognised. Krog asks:

Was Apartheid the product of some horrific shortcoming in Afrikaner culture? Could one find the key to this in Afrikaner songs and literature, in beer and braaivleis? How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart? (Krog 2002:238)

The South African state can better start anew if the sins of the past have been symbolically passed on to scapegoats. But the close association of the symbols of Afrikaner identity with the South African state under National Party rule means that they cannot be so easily disentangled from the past suffering of others.

Victimhood has become the idiom for expressing legitimacy by those discriminated against under apartheid, so it is not surprising for rhetorical and historical reasons that Afrikaners should also argue in terms of victimhood, alongside human rights and self-determination. Whilst it is all too easily considered obvious that Afrikaners are not suffering subjects, this is based on intuitive assumptions about recent history. They are positioned as perpetrators as opposed to victims – people who should be criticised and not sympathised with, and not try to be understood – yet they frequently see themselves as victims, aided by a particular framing of their history.

The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, in particular the suffering and deaths of as many as 26,000 women and children at the hands of the British army in concentration camps, is an event which resonated all through the twentieth century and is still vividly recalled today. It was largely the international outrage against their treatment at the hands of the British Army during the war that pressured Britain into granting them the sovereignty that they sought. For a nation that signed away their chance of victory for peace, being returned their country by those who defeated them within eight years is remarkable. Being suffering subjects earned them the control of their country despite defeat in war. But the lesson was learnt, and the distrust of other groups, especially those who could have power over Afrikaners, can be seen in the political machinations of South Africa over the century that followed.

Fassin and Rechtman make an argument about the role of history for the vanquished as being ultimately more powerful than the history of the victor because of the power of the lived experience. But then, the voices of this history are not those who actually experienced it but their descendants.

The slave, the colonized, the subjugated, the oppressed, the survivor, the accident victim, the refugee – these are concrete images of the vanquished whose history, far from disappearing along with their experience of defeat and misfortune, is reborn in the memory of subsequent generations. Thus... this identity is constituted not in those who were enslaved, but in their descendants, to whom the account of suffering and humiliation has been passed on. (Fassin & Rechtman 2009:16)

This aligns with the enduring effect that the memory of the Anglo-Boer War had during the first half of the twentieth century. It also aligns with the vehemence displayed by some among the younger generation of South Africans who themselves had no experience of apartheid – though it must be noted that whilst some resent those advantaged under apartheid, not all relate to the past to the same degree.

Despite their overwhelming dominance of the state and all its apparatuses by Afrikaners during apartheid, the theme of vulnerability continues in the democratic period. Whether this is a continuation of a theme that persisted despite domination during apartheid, whether the sentiment from before this period has been revived, or whether this is a new form of comprehending society supported by historical reading is unclear. There may be elements of all among different segments of the population

and between different generations, though a case can be made for the former: even while the National Party ruled over the country, they engaged the electorate in their fight against the communist-supported liberation movement.

Whilst there is much discussion that could be had about these and other ways in which Afrikaners regard themselves as victims, the underlying point is that the factors motivating people's actions must be acknowledged and taken seriously. As Laura Jeffery and Matei Candea explain, "we do not need to decide whether politics *really* lies behind all claims to victimhood, or whether victimhood *really* is pre- or meta-political. These are not two "readings", but rather two alternative configurations of reality: the question is which alternative manages to establish itself at any given point" (Jeffery & Candea 2006:290). Today, the government policies designed to correct the imbalances created by apartheid are seen to be punitive punishment against Afrikaners, and the lack of social and political justice is seen to support the view that the government values white South Africans only for the taxes they pay and offers nothing in return. The government's inaction on reducing the crime rate, especially violent crime, and in particular attacks on farms, is seen as implicit support of crime against white people.

This is not solely a historical argument, because assessing the theme of victimhood is important in understanding the nature of South African post-apartheid political participation, the space for Afrikaners in South Africa, and the dynamics among those who identify as Afrikaners or are identified by others as such. South African society is rife with tensions about the meanings of actions, and particularly in relation to the historical status of the group to which people associate themselves, or to which they are associated by others. In other words, the colour of people's skin and their names and their languages are still overtly significant in their social interactions. The ethnic classifications instituted as apartheid are still the most significant social markers. To be a proper part of South African society means being part of a moral community defined in terms of one's past actions or suffering, or those of one's predecessors. Yet despite this, it is commonly equated with skin colour, so that divergences from this must be proved.

Whilst the Truth and Reconciliation Commission embraced perpetrators of human rights abuses, typically Afrikaans men, since every member of society was

implicated in apartheid, the situation being simplified into mutually exclusive terms of victim or perpetrator, this can easily slide back into qualifications of skin colour. Legitimacy of aims comes before the judgement of actions, which means some cannot win and some cannot lose.

### **FEAR OF EXTINCTION THROUGH PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL MEANS**

Given that legitimacy is often conveyed through victimhood, it is unsurprising that Afrikaners should frequently be expressing their own suffering. This can appear as relativising others' suffering under apartheid by pointing out the advantages that people had during that time and also the ways in which Afrikaners have themselves suffered, thereby overlooking the suffering inflicted in their name.

Although it may seem counterintuitive given the impression of Afrikaners as a formerly dominant minority who are still relatively privileged, one of the fears among those in Orania is that Afrikaners are in danger of becoming extinct. Whilst the impression of affluence may be accurate, it is suffused with an existential vulnerability. For them, it is precisely because of this imbalanced impression that others have of them that their concerns are not taken seriously, and they must work to save Afrikaners from ceasing to exist as a cultural grouping by themselves.

When I first had a conversation with Jan Joubert at a GK Oranjerivier church *braai*, he told me he had also studied *volkekunde* (cultural anthropology) at university. In the course of the conversation he recounted that he had been taught three ways that a minority can disappear. A low birth rate, emigration or assimilation. He explained that there were five million whites in South Africa in 1994 and now a million have left the country, but it is not possible to talk about whites except under the guise of culture. However, when I asked if Orania was about whites or Afrikaners, he asserted that it was about Afrikaners.

These three themes of low population growth, both absolute and compared to other groups, emigration, which was frequently spoken of as permanent, and assimilation, cultural and occasionally biological were spoken of implicitly and explicitly by many in Orania. The degree of fear, factuality and resignation varied in the telling, but many comments made can be collated into these three themes.



## BIRTH RATE

Once when I visited Lida Strydom in her office at the Orania Beweging, we were discussing the idea of cultural extinction. She showed me an e-mail she had been sent. It contained a video, its American-accented voiceover outlining the threat to European cultures on the basis of the population growth of each country, as compared with the birth rate of immigrating Muslims. These Muslims were not differentiated by their cultural and national differences. The video explained that an overall birth rate of 2.11 children per couple is required to replace the population, with a figure greater than that required for the population to increase over the long term. I suggested to Lida that the generalisation of a birth rate among a religious group covering many cultural differences may distort the picture somewhat. She conceded, but said that nonetheless, 'it gives you something to think about.' What surprised me in this instance was that Lida usually appreciated the nuances of an argument, but in this case, it seemed that the numbers were of themselves persuasive.

Many, if not most, families in Orania have between three and five children. Roelien de Klerk confirmed this with the observation that *kultuurbewus* (culture-conscious) people have more children, thus making an explicit link between Afrikaans identity and the number of children a couple has. Ludwig, who has two children with his wife Retha, once posed the question of whether it was more important for Afrikaans couples to have more children, or to have fewer so that those children may be able to be better provided for and educated. He did not necessarily mean for this to be a serious call for reproduction so much as an interesting or provocative matter for discussion, but relating the number of children a couple has to the overall population of the ethnic group is something worth noting.

On one of my visits to the *dorpskantoor* (town council office), I mentioned to Francois de Vos that people in Orania married early. It was in no way unusual that people should marry in the first few years out of school. Additionally, there were several cases of teenage pregnancies which were at first scandalous, but once the couple were married, as they were encouraged to do, the baby could be celebrated as another young Oraniër. Francois commented that although people do marry and have children at an early age, it would be better still if they were even younger. Whilst he might have been referring to those who do not marry until their late twenties instead

of those who marry in their early twenties, it is another example of discussing the deeply personal matter of marrying and raising a family in relation to the overall population, in this case of Orania.

### EMIGRATION

Once I received a phonecall from a stranger, saying that he was at my house and had been told to come and visit me. Upon my arrival home, it turned out that he had been referred by some mutual friends because he was interested in moving to Australia, which is where I am from. He had some friends in New South Wales and wanted to start cattle farming there. Having grown up in the suburbs of Melbourne I was unable to advise him on cattle farming in an area I had not heard of, but Australia was frequently seen as a desirable place to live and he wanted to gather as much information as he could. It was seen by many as being just like South Africa but safer and not corrupt. People occasionally told me about their sons and daughters who had moved to Australia or New Zealand, and that they had not seen them in several years. Many dreamed of joining them, but were in Orania because they could not afford to emigrate to Australia.

For some people, the whole point of Orania was that it was in South Africa because they were and would remain South Africans. This was the country to which they and their ancestors belonged, as Afrikaners, and no political situation would make them renounce that by moving overseas.

I was told that of the four million whites in South Africa in the mid-1990s, around a million had emigrated. Although of course Afrikaners and white South Africans are not synonymous, the general point was that around a quarter of Afrikaners could no longer be counted as Afrikaners in the long term. The reason people objected to Afrikaners emigrating to Canada, the UK, New Zealand or Australia was that, although those countries provided a similar comfortable lifestyle and as English-speaking countries South Africans could adapt easily, this ease and comfort threatens the substance of their Afrikaans identities. They can adapt to their new homes too easily and thereby lose that which makes them Afrikaans. The first generation might be South Africans in Australia, but the second generation are already Australians.

This brings to mind Brian M. du Toit's (1995) study of Afrikaners who moved to Argentina following the Anglo-Boer War, because they refused to live under British rule. Within several generations the ties to South Africa weakened, and they became Spanish-speaking Argentinians of South African descent in around three generations.

South African sources still refer to the 'Afrikaners' in Argentina. The term means people reared on Southern African soil; imbued with patriotism centered on South Africa; Afrikaans speaking; and who normally reside in or are citizens of South Africa. These are cultural, emotional, geographical, linguistic, and legal criteria. When we deal with people who have declared under oath their loyalty to the Argentinian flag, who feel themselves to be Argentinians, and who mostly do not speak Afrikaans even if they understand it..., we cannot be dealing with Afrikaners. Nor can we be dealing, after almost a century with a 'Boere homeland' (ibid.:420)

It may be that Afrikaners are able to remain Afrikaners when they are living in Africa, or whether it is a matter of how easily a group can be assimilated into the surrounding population. Dane Kennedy asserts that Afrikaners who left for Kenya and the former Rhodesia insisted on remaining distinct from the surrounding white population who were English-speaking (Kennedy 1987:21, 27).

### ASSIMILATION

Conversations about the decline of Afrikaans were relatively frequent in Orania. On the radio one evening Tannie Adelaide Boshoff lamented that packaging was no longer in Afrikaans, that she could no longer buy *borrie*, only turmeric. Although this did not seem a major hurdle to me since most Afrikaans speakers also speak English, Ludwig, who had lived in the Netherlands, was familiar with packaging in Europe in many languages and argued that the same should be done in South Africa. Indeed, there was no reason why labelling must be limited to English and Afrikaans as it often is, since South Africa has so many more languages.

Despite the eleven official languages, Afrikaans sits alongside English as the two main languages in public use. The difference in the treatment of the two languages is that the use of Afrikaans is considered contentious through its association with apartheid, as a minority language, whereas English is cosmopolitan

and neutral. Thus, even if Afrikaans is chosen over a Nguni language to be used alongside English in the public sphere, its use carries a political weight that is not attached to other languages. I was told that the national government uses English in its communications relating to the Northern Cape, despite the province being almost entirely Afrikaans-speaking, being populated mainly by coloureds. Apart from this recognition of the Northern Cape being Afrikaans-speaking, the discussion about language often assumes that Afrikaans is the preserve of white Afrikaners.

Various sets of numbers were recounted to me, about how many fewer Afrikaans language schools there are now compared to during the 1990s. A multi-religious society means that schools are secular, so religion does not form a part of school education, to which people object. The content of school history curriculum is a passionately contested dispute. People argued that first language education should continue as far as tertiary education, and regarded the University of Pretoria's reduction in the number of courses offered in Afrikaans as an attack on 'our' universities. They rallied against the Anglicisation of politics and public space, and that this has affected Afrikaans itself through the adoption of English words.

The same tensions apply to the renaming of streets and cities, from offering public remembrance of Afrikaans heroes to African heroes, replacing the history of one group with the history of their victors. The commemoration of historical events significant to Afrikaners is considered as hostile because it is associated with the past, a marker of distinction which in the past represented inequality. The kind of celebrations which take place in Orania are markers of ethnic difference which to others represents their victimisation in the past. Eriksen addresses the subject of stigmatised minorities, saying that cultural assimilation is a common means of removing stigma "but it presupposes that there is a real, practical possibility of removing the stigma imposed by the dominant population. If, for example, the Sami had been physically very different from the Norwegians, the process of assimilation would probably have been more difficult" (Eriksen 2002:30). South Africans wear their identities on the outside, and whilst the stigma of Afrikaners could be ameliorated by assimilating into South Africa's new cosmopolitan English-speaking culture, the colour of former privilege remains.

Whatever the actual effect of these changes, their symbolic effect is not lost on those whom they are meant to satisfy, nor those who are symbolically disempowered through the same process. The complaints people in Orania make about the dissipation of their culture are necessarily subjective. Yet when, as they see it, they are asked to sacrifice their language, when their church must change its views and when jobs are allocated by skin colour (with privilege allocated in the opposite direction as it was under apartheid), it is emotional, especially when compounded by physical vulnerability. To those attempting to maintain these ethnic boundaries, marking difference and maintaining culture becomes all the more important the fewer people there are, and without any significant political representation to protect their interests. Although the Freedom Front Plus (VF+) represents the interests of Afrikaners, some argue that working together with the government and occasionally compromising means they are undermining Afrikaner interests from the inside. Manie Opperman said that in the course of drawing provincial and electoral boundaries in preparation for the 1994 elections, it was ensured that black or coloured people would be in the majority in each electorate. He said that the population of Hopetown, the nearest town to Orania, grew curiously before the elections, ensuring that so long as people vote along ethnic lines, it will be difficult for parties representing white interests to win seats. Wynand also said that the Northern Cape provincial boundaries were drawn so that its population was not entirely Afrikaans and coloured, and thereby completely Afrikaans-speaking.

The current and future fate of Afrikaners within an unsympathetic, if not hostile, state, was a frequent topic of conversation in Orania. Their collective trajectory from a small but powerful nation with cultural, military, and scientific accomplishments, to a splintered minority unable to agree what their future should be or even if they could properly be said to have one, was frequently lamented. Causes were attributed by different individuals variously to the government, communism, secret organisations, Afrikaners' own past failures and members of the *volk* being wooed by the idea of a multiracial South Africa into forgetting their own identities.

## VIOLENCE

South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world, and as a visible and relatively well-off part of the population, white people often claim they are more vulnerable to attack, forming the impression for them that violence is perpetrated by black people against white. One weekend Esmien Kruger, who lived on a neighbouring farm, was not at church. Her son Derius explained that her sister and her husband had had their house broken into. They were bound and beaten while the attackers loaded items of value into a van. Esmien had gone to support her sister while her sister's husband remained in hospital. He had been beaten so badly that the stent holding open arteries near his heart had been crushed. Inevitably, people were deeply affected when people close to them were subject to such violence. Many people had moved to Orania following violent incidents, or for some, the threat of violence was enough to prompt them to move somewhere they considered safe. Quintin Diedrichs laughed incredulously when describing how, after a few months in Orania, he came across a photo of his house in Pretoria. The amount of security made it like living in a prison, but it was only now that he was outside it, that he could recognise how he had imprisoned himself for safety. Carol-Ann, visiting relatives in Orania, said that although the crime is awful, she can afford the protective measures against it, but if she were to move, it would be because of the humiliation of a society which constantly tells you that you are a bad person. Many of the people in Orania have first hand experience as victims of violence, or threats of violence whose emotional impact demonstrates their vulnerability. One family relocated after an attempted but unsuccessful carjacking in Pretoria, deciding that the prosperity they had in the city was not worth the risk of violence. Another family moved to Orania after seven armed robberies but later returned to KwaZulu-Natal. Annatjie Joubert pointed out that whilst it was wrong to carry notions about whole populations on the basis of the actions of a few individuals, it was important to be sympathetic towards people who had experienced violent crime.

Orania is a remarkably safe community, in which people frequently leave their houses or cars unlocked, although not everyone was quite so relaxed, since 'everything has happened at some point in Orania.' Some people were quick to ascribe the lack of crime in Orania to there being no black people, whilst others

would argue that other small Northern Cape towns were similarly peaceful. A break-in at the supermarket was first ascribed to coloured workers from nearby farms, but as with most other incidents, it was then considered more likely that people from within the town were responsible.

Race and violence – fears and threats – came up together in conversation. One teenager said that people outside primarily consider Orania to be racist, and indeed, they are, because they are scared of having their heads knocked in. When they talk with dismay about people being killed, about the pointlessness, and the disproportionate violence with which it is done, they are mostly talking about white people being killed. Considering white people as primary targets simplifies the picture and involves ignoring other groups targeted for attacks, such as immigrants from elsewhere in Africa. If there is perceived threat of violent crime in everyday life, reading whatever signals might be at hand may prove significant. If people perceive, as they often do in Orania – however incorrectly – that the threat of crime comes from people who have black skin, then certain behaviours can follow. The stakes are high.

Even if people's fears about safety and security are disproportionate to the risk, the difficulty was outlined by a resident of Pretoria. He said the problem is that you cannot tell the difference between the person who will hand your wallet back to you if you drop it, and the person who will cut your throat to steal your wallet. Coincidentally, I once found a wallet on the stairs outside my flat in Pretoria. Some young men had been struggling to carry a refrigerator up the stairs and I surmised that one had dropped their wallet, so I asked an older man standing next to a car and trailer if he knew who they were. He said they were his sons. I gave him the wallet and explained that I had found it. He confirmed that it belonged to his son, looked inside it, and was astonished that the money was still in it. In other words, a black man expected that a white girl would steal money, just like white people expected black people to steal money.

Regardless of whether people are actual victims of violence or only fearful, it lends substance to their feelings of victimhood. Whether violence is systematic or not, whether it is targeted at white people or not, South Africa is violent and makes people feel vulnerable. One salient example of violence is that which is perceived to

be directed at commercial farming, a niche traditionally filled by Afrikaners, and pertinent to a rural community such as Orania, even if very few such attacks have occurred in the region where Orania is situated. Violent attacks committed against families on farms are frequently cited to illustrate crime and corruption in South Africa. The main elements of such accounts are that the victims are Afrikaners, the perpetrators are assumed to be black, the level of violence is disproportionate for the theft of property, and the level of concern about this particular kind of crime among Afrikaners is much higher than among the police and the authorities. Afrikaner interest groups focus on white victims of crime alongside white poverty and the sidelining of Afrikaans language and history. A report from Genocide Watch in August 2012 considered the situation of farmers in South Africa to be of great concern (2012:68). In using concepts relating to genocide I do not mean to make a case that Afrikaners are or are not subject to extinction at the hands of any particular group; however, considering the way Oraniërs explain their situation in South Africa, discussing animosities on the basis of group definitions through these concepts is instructive. Although genocide is in part characterised by the intent to bring about a group's physical destruction (Magnarella 2002:310), ethnocide or cultural genocide is the "intent to destroy the language, religion or culture of a national, racial or religious group on the grounds of national or racial origin or religious belief" (cited in Totten, Parsons & Hitchcock 2002:60). Afrikaners may not be being persecuted as such, although many believe that they are, or perhaps this is cushioned by the fact that they are still relatively well off. Oraniërs do not trust the government and authorities but need to ensure they do not alienate them. Koos pointed out that the state is not adequately serving either whites or most blacks, but it has a very different relationship to the two groups. People in Orania said they would rather be ruled badly by their own kind than be ruled well by others, and this helped them to explain other South Africans' tolerance of the ANC.

Nonetheless, the visibility of white people amongst the wealthier section of society, and as victims of crime, coupled with the predominantly black government's inaction, has led some white people to the impression of their being collective victims. This raises the question as to the nature of the fear that Afrikaners are likely to be physically eliminated, and the fact that this seems a more mainstream concern



in Orania than among Afrikaners in general. Is the group prior to particulars of the situation in which they find themselves, or do the often brutal murders solidify social boundaries, or is it a matter of being able to relate to certain people and being more concerned about their fate?

To some extent Orania's philosophy is a caution against thinking Afrikaners or whites are in an exceptional position, to indulging in the status of victim. Jaco Mulder gave an example of this, saying there was a squatter camp with white residents near his home town. On account of their white skins they receive more attention than poor black people, and receive an incredible amount of support from businesses and community members, yet the residents still do not succeed in changing their circumstances. A police captain in Greytown, of Indian descent himself, introduced us to some shack-dwellers who received much help and sympathy from the Indian community, and yet lived in squalor, their house filled and surrounded by mountains of garbage. The message was that even when community support is provided, people must take at least some degree of responsibility for their future.

### **TRUST AND BELONGING**

The following example illustrates the difficulty of trying to inhabit a position that is not straightforward since other people also have the power to define the group. For a fairly politicised minority, the feeling of vulnerability is created through it being unclear who can be trusted. The following example will illustrate some of the ways in which these dynamics vary.

Over the Easter weekend in 2010 the Oewerpark was full with visitors and residents *braaiing* and enjoying themselves. On the Saturday evening I was *braaiing* with Jaco and Lynette Mulder and Wynand and Esme Boshoff, when Jaco received a phone call. He told us all that Eugene Terre'Blanche, leader of the AWB (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, Afrikaner Resistance Movement), had been killed in a farm attack, apparently by two of his workers. It was hard to fathom what this meant; although none present had any sympathy with his views, Lynette commented that nobody, not even he, deserved to die like that.

During the following week, a phone call was made to Orania's radio station with a threat, the precise nature of which I never learnt. Following this, people mobilised to be able to defend the town, a *bakkie* with a spotlight patrolled the town and all cars entering Orania through the main gates were stopped. A town meeting was held with a representative of the Hopetown police station present. Some people questioned whether, in case of a threat, the police could even be trusted to help defend them, rather than assisting in an attack. The whole town was not present, and many people drifted out early, before the meeting had concluded. Some because they regarded the meeting as a waste of time; others, as it turned out, left to see a television program of an interview with Eugene Terre'Blanche, filmed only a few weeks before. Steve told me later that he had left the meeting early because he was embarrassed at the way people were talking about the policeman, as he should be treated with courtesy a guest – especially one on whom the town's safety may rely. On the one hand, in case of the threatened attack taking place, the police would be vital allies. On the other, people's fears had led to them not regard the police as being in any way reliable or trustworthy, particularly in so delicate a situation.

Given this underlying theme of who can be trusted, it is even more interesting that until then, the town had no emergency plans. In the following weeks and months, emergency plans were devised. These involved dividing the town into sections and organising evacuation routes and meeting points, with section organisers overseeing the process. The plans were general, for all kinds of eventualities, not just violent attacks. A census was conducted, which turned out to be recording the residents in each household and also which firearms they had and whether they had any military training. There was a kind of local *kommando* unit in the area prior to this incident but no general plans for the town.

In the week following this threat I asked Wynand and Prof Carel about their views on what they thought this tense situation would bring. All over the country people were preparing themselves for conflict, in case this attack on a prominent Afrikaner led to moves being made against other whites. Wynand said the only other time he had had this feeling that the country could erupt was when Chris Hani was killed. Yet on the other hand, he said, there is a saying that neither the best nor the worst happens in South Africa. For all the extremes South Africa brings, if other

incidents had not pushed the country to the extreme, then this one might not either. Prof Carel's assessment was more circumspect. He explained that Terre'Blanche had not had a viable vision for the future, that his idea of a *volkstaat* had effectively described apartheid. The sub-text to Prof Carel's philosophical half hour explanation was that Terre'Blanche was a man without a plan, in which case from a historical view he was simply a blip and his demise would not have any lasting impact.

Dawie van Niekerk once said, appending an explanation of how different people in Orania are and how some are untrustworthy, that at the end of the day they are all in the same boat – well, except maybe a few of them. Even if most Oraniërs did not feel much like sympathy towards Terre'Blanche, the fact that somebody considered them as akin to him meant that it forced them onto the same side, into defensive preparations.



Gathering by the cross on 11 November 2010. Prof Carel seated, Manie Opperman speaking, with Francois Joubert behind him.

By the highway that cuts through Orania is a large white cross, with the ridge as its backdrop. At night time it is illuminated by car headlights, the patchwork of reflectors on its surface making it glow. The cross commemorates the victims of farm murders. A memorial was held there on Remembrance Day, 2010. In his speech, as mayor of Orania, Carel iv made the following points.

...Choosing the date of 11<sup>th</sup> November, a day when people worldwide commemorate those who fell in wars in order to try and make some kind of sense of these events, for a memorial to the victims of farm attacks, means that we are declaring that these attacks can be described as a low

intensity undeclared war. If it is a war, then it requires asking, what are its origins? Who against whom? Being an undeclared war makes these questions difficult to answer, but it also does not mean that it is a planned operation. On the contrary, it is something much more dangerous, in that there is an implicit consensus among people who carry out these actions that they are desirable. That means that attacks are unpredictable and cannot be challenged on any one front. But it is a consensus that rests on the assumption that people who look like us do not belong on this continent. There is no way that you can hide the fact that you belong to a previously dominant minority. There is no hat big enough to obscure your European origins. ... That position of dominance elicited [*ontlok*] the fury of many fellow countrymen, against a small number of people distributed throughout the land. ...

This presents a unique challenge, which grew out of the strategy that our *volk* previously employed: that of being economically dependent on people who are also our political competitors. And it is this dependency which reverses the normal order of things. The normal order is that when people take control of a land, they occupy or take military control of it first. In a normal conflict, people fight over an area and whoever wins takes control. In South Africa, the power changed hands and not yet the land. The fact that power changed hands sixteen years ago left some people with the naïve expectation that a struggle for control of the territory would not follow, but those in power want to control the land.

That is why there is a silent consensus, and it is part of the structure of South Africa in the present time. And the answer to that which we need to develop is much more than security. Of course every farmer should be ready to defend himself ... but it does not affect the structural tension that causes it. The only answer to this crisis is that we alone can defend ourselves, through occupying and working a region of land. Nothing else will ensure security in the long term. And that is what we began Orania with. We alone do not have the answer for everyone confronted with this crisis, since we do not have the means to implement it for everybody. But by demonstrating our ideas and plans, Orania offers a glimmer of light in the darkness. There is hope, there are still possibilities, there are still ways to build a future.

That is why we commemorate on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November people who have passed away or been seriously injured, because they tried to perpetuate an existence. But, in the spirit of the greatest solidarity – we need new plans. The solution is at least theoretically there, and that's why we sit in Orania working to show how it can be done. To be prepared to receive people who previously dismissed our actions as unnecessary, when they realise that they are necessary. Come, let us thank the Lord for life and let us protect it with everything we have because it is a gift from God. Furthermore, let us build a future in which our children can be safe.

Even though nothing became of the more dramatic threat of violence against the whole town, or that feared by the conspiracy theorists against the whole white population, the implication is that gradually, one at a time, through acts of violence against individuals or symbolic shaming of the things that form who they are, people are reading that they are unwelcome.

In Orania, and in more conservative Afrikaner circles, people frequently talk about the demise of their state and their people. It is the feeling of vulnerability, whether objective or imagined, which is relevant. At the very least, many Afrikaners feel unwelcome in South Africa and their small numbers makes it a question of survival – physical for the individual and other for the group. Regardless of the accuracy of the facts and figures provided, being able to imagine a future for South Africa with Afrikaners in it is becoming for some increasingly difficult. In this light, Orania can be seen as a defensive mechanism, a plan for the survival of individuals in the short term and the group in the long term. Besides the physical security it offers, it provides cosmological security, a future for a group whose centuries in Africa may otherwise come to an end.

In February 2010, Grain SA, the industry body for grain farmers, held a regional meeting in Orania. Farmers came from the surrounding districts as well as those from within and around Orania to listen to several speakers. In particular, Pieter Mulder, the leader of the VF+ in his position as Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, was there to hear and respond to the concerns of grain farmers. Farmers and officials complained about the sharp decrease in the number of commercial farms over the last few decades, bemoaning the neglect of the industry by the government and the low prices they got for their produce. The meeting was in many respects not very enlivening, with several attendees falling asleep, but was remarkable in one respect: it was framed in terms of their responsibility and capacity to provide enough *mielie* (maize staple) to much of Southern Africa. It was the only time inside or outside Orania that I heard people talk about belonging to Africa but not being permitted to contribute, even though this difficulty is also expressed by a number of white South Africans who want to help make the country a better place but fear that their white skin means they will not be able to.

## **OUTSIDERS**

Given the extent to which groups within society are positioned to view each other as opposing, and their history of conflict, it is not surprising that they should, to the extent that they see themselves as suffering, view others as the architects of that suffering. This feeling of social imbalance cannot help but to affect a social contract based on mutuality. The present is heavily informed by the relatively fresh wounds of the past, but because this is accentuated politically, what some people can expect to give and what some can expect to receive is dictated from above, rather than the organic whole that Rousseau describes. Whether South Africa has ever been a single society in Rousseau's sense is doubtful, as indeed it is whether any society is truly reciprocal. But where some countries might comprise a single society with ambiguous areas at the margins, South Africa's divisions have long cut right through it.

In light of this complexity, redrawing boundaries to form an ethnic enclave is not antisocial if there is no existing 'social' which its creation can undermine. This would make Orania a symptom rather than a cause of a lack of social cohesion – they are stepping out of 'society' because the social contract does not apply. The people who move to Orania are excluded from the moral community on the grounds of not belonging to the community of victims, but it is on those grounds that their claims of being unfairly judged cannot be acknowledged. Ultimately, the politics of victimhood is overwhelming, so that arguments are made on the grounds of suffering, on who owes what to whom historically rather than specifically. It seems, then, that a narrative of victimhood must be externally validated for their cause to be considered just.

If victimhood is providing legitimacy to the current South African government comprised of groups who struggled against apartheid, it could equally be argued that the Afrikaners' sense of vulnerability following the Anglo-Boer War which eventually led to the situation against which the anti-apartheid struggle fought. Situations of victimhood followed by political legitimacy can follow a repetitive or alternating pattern (see Mamdani 2001). Where Fassin and Rechtman (2009) talk about the victim's account ultimately overcoming that of the perpetrator, in the case

of South Africa since apartheid, the victor is the victim, the vanquished is the perpetrator, meaning that the trend of history being written by the victor is further supplemented by the irrefutability of the victim's account. This places the burden of proof on Afrikaners because of the unquestionability of the victimhood of the other side. This is then another kind of victimhood, of not being taken seriously.

## VIII: CONCLUSION – DIVERSITY IN UNITY

And there it was again. Another religion turned against itself.  
Another edifice constructed by the human mind, decimated by  
human nature. – Arundhati Roy (1998:287)

I began this thesis by pointing out that unless we earnestly try to understand all anthropological subjects from their own perspectives, we can find that in assuming some people to be immoral, we use our own rather than their measures or morality and logic. But we cannot assume we know what we will find out, just because we have moral indignation on our side. If we do try to understand, we can find that things do make sense.

John Sharp does this, in his investigation of the efforts of the politically influential *volkekundiges* (cultural anthropologists) W.W.M. Eiselin and P.J. Coertze (Sharp 2010). They attempted to set up a university for black South Africans under the auspices of the University of Pretoria. “But if Eiselin and Coertze had been convinced that black people could not benefit from higher education, or did not need it because they were destined to remain a subordinate stratum of the population, their labours... would have been entirely nonsensical” (Sharp 2010:34). This alternative understanding of their efforts undermines the assumption that their support of apartheid was out of a belief in racial superiority. Sharp’s view is that the “yawning gulf” between Eiselin’s intentions and the implementation of the education system for black students was due to Verwoerd’s cynicism in declining to educate blacks “above their station” (Sharp 2010:37). Nevertheless, even in reaffirming his disagreement with Eiselin’s ideas, Sharp demonstrates that subtlety and consistency can lie beneath apparently straightforwardly cynical interpretations, which is why informants’ perspectives should be taken seriously.

There are many different historical arguments on the causes of apartheid, but it is clear that it was neither a clear nor static plan: it changed over the course of the half-century that it was the policy of the South African government. Having set in motion this idea of shaping the world to fit their ideas, the Afrikaners in power saw the path as a long one, but one which would result in self-determination for each of



South Africa's groups. Yet having a plan which is consistent, and that plan being implemented consistently are two distinct things:

By redefining the present in terms of an ideal end, the reality of apartheid was substituted with a fantasy that over the years had very little in common with the real policy of apartheid. And through the years, in ever growing theoretical abstraction, the dream persisted. However, in the actual experience of day-to-day life for a black person this dream turned into a nightmare. This is the tragedy of the South African saga. While blacks were treated as inferiors and lived in a culture of marginalisation and insecurity, whites believed that they had established a peaceful and just society by the establishment of homogenous black nations and states (Kingham 1990:68).

If we do accept honest intentions on the part of at least some of the people who devise parts of apartheid theory, whether we place the point of divergence in the transfer from theory to policy, or policy to practice, or practice to how it was experienced, we are still left with a grand plan which did not work.

Afrikaners are reaping the results of past mistakes in what they perceive as the failures of present-day South Africa. Sometimes this is by inheriting the mistakes of previous generations of the group to which people belong, but since South Africa's history is still so fresh, the past and the present actors are often the same individuals. The two plans of Orania and apartheid speak to each other, because if it were not that the people of Orania are those in whose name apartheid existed, Orania would not be so unremarkable.

Those who brought about Orania's existence as a growth point for a *volkstaat* took the failure of apartheid for granted. If this is so, then Orania cannot be a continuation of what we commonly understand as apartheid. It is a continuation not of the apartheid of later decades, but returns to the initial premises from which it was built in the mid-twentieth century. Orania is inextricably linked to the apartheid past, both in the perception outsiders have of them and the roots of their ideology, but the fact that they are now applying to themselves an idea which they previously applied to others suggests that for some, at least, apartheid was a sincere means of attaining something other than racial supremacy or exploitation.

If racial exploitation was not the main motivation for apartheid, if it was instead something more meaningful than instrumental benefit, then telling Oraniërs that they are wrong will not change their views. Unless the conceptions underlying

their actions change, certain things will remain the same. Johann Kinghorn argues that apartheid was a means of creating order, of making the world make sense.

The massive social engineering which apartheid represented, was by and large designed to disentangle Afrikaners from a plural world. The ultimate aim was to restore a world of 'ownness' for Afrikaners. And if such an 'own' world could not be restored, then at least some 'own' areas – such as those who press for a so-called Volkstaat still believe possible to achieve – had to be preserved (Kinghorn 1994:403).

Indeed, this investigation of Orania seems to bear this out. The vast effort and planning that apartheid entailed can better be explained in terms of the fact that it enabled Afrikaner nationalists to implement a strategy for the survival of the Afrikaner group. Orania too is founded to create order from multicultural South African society. Where boundaries are not enforced, they feel they are at risk of dissolution: minorities are vulnerable and should be protected rather than allowed to become absorbed by an English-speaking cosmopolitan rootlessness. They do not think Afrikaner culture can survive in South Africa unless the social institutions which maintain it are protected. Apartheid was a plan which allowed this protection of difference, and as its core idea, that the world is and should be composed on discrete ethnic units has not been disproved by apartheid's failure, the same plan can be kept but now implemented differently.

Alternately, if we agree with Giliomee in understanding "apartheid first and foremost as a vehicle for nurturing the unity of the *volk*... [and] that if apartheid were to become inimical to the ethnic interests of Afrikanerdom, it could be substantially modified or even jettisoned" (Beinart & Dubow 1995:15), then apartheid can be seen as a strategy for the persistence of the group, and less an end in itself. In light of that, it is easier to account for most Afrikaners having adapted so easily to the new system, and even that they pursued the negotiations in the first place. In paving the way for change, President F.W. de Klerk ensured survival, yet broke the solidarity.

There are strong themes of control and order running through Afrikaner history and now into Orania. But at the same time as they depict themselves in continuity with the steely settlers and persecuted Huguenots, the principled Voortrekkers and the idealistic creators of apartheid, this thread that appears with retrospective vision obscures the thread of creativity. It may be a creativity based on

fear for survival, but they do bear out former president P.W. Botha's phrase 'adapt or die'. For all the implications of conservatism, however, this adaptability is also longstanding, judging from the Transvaal Republic's last president Paul "Kruger's last message to his people: 'Take everything that is good and noble from your past and build thereon your future'" (Patterson 1957:41).

In this thesis I have shown how aspects of Orania's daily life have precedence in ideology or tradition but how these are now reinterpreted or adapted to new circumstances. In fact, Orania's method for ensuring the survival of Afrikaners into the future requires changing one of its most fundamental traits. As Wynand Boshoff put it, 'cheap black labour is more integral to Afrikaner culture than *melktert*.'<sup>5</sup> The unity of the early Cape settlers was gradually developed through what their European origins meant in relation to the other inhabitants of South Africa: it implied a privileged class status, a visible distinction from indentured labourers and slaves, which signified what kind of work they did. Europeans formed a distinct class, while "the only workers who were not independent were slaves or Khoi servants" (Gerstner 1991:258). Whites working for other whites was avoided by creating new farms for themselves on the frontier. Defining themselves against the labouring classes started at the very beginning with the introduction of slavery, so in that sense, being overseers and not labourers is one of the oldest defining characteristics of Afrikaners. Orania argues that it is precisely this which must change for them to survive. One of the dominant and enduring effects of apartheid was the overlapping of racial and economic categories. Thus, Orania represents no less than the overhaul of the social position that white South Africans are accustomed to.

South Africa has changed dramatically in the lifetimes of most adults, and it will surely continue to change. To counteract this, the residents of Orania are constructing a recognisable world in which they feel they can belong, and that conforms to and reproduces their cultural norms. Despite living in this town that is widely acknowledged to be weird, Oraniërs are trying to live their lives in a way that makes sense to them. Getting on in South African society would require them to

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<sup>5</sup> A traditional dessert, similar to custard tart

repent of a past that they do not wholly reject, and doing so would, they believe, require them to give up the symbols of their Afrikaner identities.

If a group of people agree that they need to act in order to ensure the persistence of Afrikaans identity, and that this should be done through a separate ethnic territory, they still need to actually do it. Orania has a central ideal as defined by its founders and those who persist with that vision, but even that has elements that need to be figured out along the way and modified. Both in ideological terms and in practical terms of its size, Orania makes it easy to enact change. The idealistic people who have the commitment to join Orania often have strong views that they want to implement so when these differ, conflict arises.

No actual society is utopian. It may, therefore, be difficult for any society's members not to imagine orders in at least some respects preferable to those under which they do live and labor. If they can conceive of better orders, how are their actions to be kept in sufficient conformity to the prevailing order for that order to persist? The conception of the possible is always in some degree the enemy of the actual (Rappaport 1999:17).

The ability to implement ideas is thus both a strength and a weakness in the community. The disagreement divides residents roughly in line with two perspectives: those who are willing to engage with people outside Orania and outside the *volk*, and those who fear that such interactions will dissolve the very boundaries that require a *volkstaat* in order to be maintained. Even starting with this premise that they are the same, in a remote town in the Northern Cape the oppositional boundaries are far away, in the cities and the places where people who they do not understand live. In Orania there are less obvious distinctions between people so they are not primarily defined as white Afrikaners in their daily interactions. A *volk* may live through its institutions, but those institutions will not necessarily be in agreement about the nature of the *volk*.

Two very different schools reflect these differences in the way they educate their pupils, and the schools and individual families influence the knowledge the younger generation has about the outside world. Economic roles differentiate people and their personal experiences involve many different kinds of interactions with people of other groups. These attitudes cannot easily be collapsed as racism but

display a complex, if often contradictory, view of how people should relate to each other. Orania's multiplicity of churches reflect an easy tendency towards schism. Even if they can dismiss the differences as superficial, the different churches represent different attitudes towards non-Afrikaners. However, ultimately their perspective on the world is shared: that people belong to nations, and that nations should persist.

The underlying premise of Oraniërs' cosmological framework is that they are ultimately alike. They are working from and reaffirming the illusion of solidity and stability, which is not new:

Embedded within the category 'Afrikanerdom' are the questionable premises that all (white) Afrikaans-speakers are automatically integrated into the cross-class organic unity of the volk, instinctively share the presumably innate 'Afrikaner' conservative traditional cultural values, and are always available for ethnic mobilisation in terms of their common 'Afrikaner' interests. ... Moreover, the various Afrikaner nationalist movements in South African history were always constituted by a differentiated and shifting ensemble of social forces – each clearly articulating widely different conceptions and expectations of the 'volk' and what 'its' interests were (O'Meara 1983:6).

Even within the controlled environment of the town, the outcome of enculturation is not deterministic. Education can only play a limited and contingent role in ensuring Orania's and thus Afrikaners' survival. Lindi Todd remarked that as of 1998, Orania had yet to find its feet in terms of its relationship to the outside, that "the volkstaat supporters were inhabiting a liminal space: in flux, still in process, in-between, deliberately reflective" (Todd 2008:89). Yet, more than a decade on, the observation still applies. Orania may have gained confidence in itself and its goals and its positioning in South Africa, but it is still a work in progress, always becoming.

The dynamics of Orania's community illustrates that cultural homogeneity does not mean agreement. If the survival of Afrikaners requires maintaining group solidarity, does its internal conflict not undermine this proposition? Yet even if they disagree about whether it is important for structures to retain the same content or simply for the structures to remain, their ultimate outlook and goal is more united.

This research cannot give any particular reasons why Afrikaners have seemingly gone to such great lengths to maintain their identity of being a group, and why this idea of being a group has persisted in the face of internal schism and

external conflict. But do we need to explain why people want their group to persist through time? In 1997, when my parents took us travelling through the Kimberley region of Western Australia, we met an old Aboriginal lady in the tiny town of Kalumburu. She told us that she could only speak her mother tongue, which was the indigenous language of that area, with only a few people. The children did not want to learn it, so when her generation passed on it would no longer exist.

Orania represents the continuation of a longstanding struggle for the persistence of the group, motivated by fear, making it accurate to say that

Afrikaners... can be said to have domesticated nationalism in order to exorcise their feelings of insecurity and relativity. That means that they were/are not nationalists in the pure sense of the word. They... are survivalists. They were not truly bittereinders (die-hards) – even though many chose to see themselves as such. Their bravado was not born from an immutable belief in the superiority of their race but from insecurity. Theirs was the fanaticism of the lonely (Kinghorn 1994:403).



‘20 years: the dream becomes real!’

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